

Л. Ф. Шитова

# 350 IDIOMS WITH THEIR ORIGIN,

OR THE IDIOMATIC CAKE  
YOU CAN EAT AND HAVE IT TOO

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**350 ИДИОМ  
И ИХ ПРОИСХОЖДЕНИЕ,  
ИЛИ КАК НЕВИННОСТЬ СОБЛЮСТИ  
И КАПИТАЛ ПРИОБРЕСТИ**

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**Шитова Л. Ф.**  
**Ш55** 350 Idioms with Their Origin, or The Idiomatic Cake  
You Can Eat and Have It Too = 350 идиом и их происхож-  
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Заключительная книга цикла авторских фразеологи-  
ческих словарей содержит новый подход к изучению идиома-  
тики. Структура книги поможет глубже понять значение  
идиомы, а история её происхождения останется в памяти,  
что позволит адекватно употребить это выражение в речи,  
делая её более богатой и красочной.

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## FOREWORD

### ВСТУПЛЕНИЕ

Изучение идиоматики, или фразеологии — увлекательный процесс, демонстрирующий богатство любого языка. Сталкиваясь с идиомой, читатель пытается понять её значение, а догадавшись (как правило, благодаря контексту), делает попытку проанализировать составляющие её элементы, чтобы докопаться до сути производимого эффекта. Привлекательность использования идиоматики в речи объясняется стремлением говорящего к образности речи, а также (не в последнюю очередь) желанием продемонстрировать свободное владение языком, одним из признаков которого является уместное и адекватное использование идиом. Родная речь носителя языка также весьма богата фразеологическими выражениями, которыми он пользуется, зачастую не отдавая себе в этом отчёта.

Настоящая книга появилась на свет в результате наблюдения за ростом интереса изучающих английский язык к образному английскому выражению, имеющему (или не имеющему) соответствующего русского эквивалента. Услышав или прочитав идиому, разобравшись в её структуре и поняв переносный смысл, у человека возникает естественное желание получить ответ на вопрос о её происхождении.

К средствам образной речи мы относим не только собственно идиомы, т.е. устойчивые словосочетания, значение которых не выводимо из значений составляющих их компонентов. Здесь также будут представлены широкоупотребительные клише, существующие во многих языках мира, библейские изречения, крылатые фразы, устойчивые словосочетания, популярные слова и выражения. Срок жизни

многих из них недолог, некоторые — однодневки, однако целый ряд фразеологизмов оставляет заметный след в языке и остаётся в употреблении длительное время.

Автору хочется с помощью этой книги удовлетворить интерес людей, увлечённых английским языком (и образной речью, в частности) к истории возникновения того или иного оборота речи. Одни истории кажутся занимательными, другие драматическими или комическими, как сама жизнь, частью которой эти выражения являются. Со временем исходное значение речевого оборота может искажаться, тем интереснее узнать обо всех перипетиях этого выражения. Знакомство с историей той или иной речевой единицы расширит общекультурные фоновые знания читателя, т.к. книга содержит многочисленные отсылки к выдающимся деятелям истории и культуры прошлого, историческим и литературным фактам.

Каждая словарная статья содержит английское выражение, его эквивалент или перевод на русский язык, краткое толкование, предложение, иллюстрирующее его смысл, и наконец, происхождение. Цитируемое происхождение может быть гипотетично (поскольку нередко встречаются различные этимологические версии одной и той же единицы), поэтому приводятся разные трактовки. Как правило, выбор делается в пользу более вероятной или чаще встречающейся версии.

В книге сохранена орфография использованных источников, включая вариативность написания некоторых сложных слов и имён собственных.

Сделанные художником иллюстрации призваны упростить понимание идиомы и её происхождения и/или могут послужить «пазлом» для разгадки того, что скрывается за тем или иным рисунком.

Тщательный отбор фразеологического материала, представленного в настоящей книге, проводился с учётом степени его употребительности в современном английском языке.

Особая благодарность Татьяне Львовне Брускиной за предоставление редких источников.

# A

## **abomination of desolation**

мерзость запустения

MEANING: the abomination that makes desolate; in modern speech the phrase is used to denote anything very hateful, regarded with aversion, an abominable thing  
*For decades, under the Communist regime, the abomination of desolation had reigned in most Russian Orthodox churches.*

ORIGIN: From the Bible (Daniel, 9:27; Matthew, 24:15). The biblical story has it that when the Romans conquered Palestine, they set up their standard in the Holy of Holies in the temple of Jerusalem. The Holy of Holies was the sanctuary of the temple, entered only by the high priest. The Roman standard within the walls of the sanctuary was regarded by the people of Jerusalem with horror and disgust, as an abomination. The abominable place was forsaken by the people and fell into ruin and neglect. As the Roman standard caused abomination and brought destruction, it was called an abomination of desolation.

## **absence makes the heart grow fonder**

в разлуке чувство крепнет

MEANING: separation intensifies love  
*My boyfriend is going to South America and I won't see him for six months. — Ah, well, absence makes the heart grow fonder.*

ORIGIN: This sentiment was first expressed in an anonymous sixteenth century poem; became very common by the end of the nineteenth century.

### **add insult to injury**

подлить масла в огонь

MEANING: to heap humiliation on someone after they have already been hurt

*Having cut off our electricity in error, the Electricity Board added insult to injury by charging us the cost of reconnection.*

ORIGIN: The words appear to be from a Latin writer, Phaedrus, who refers to Aesop's fable of the bald man who swatted a fly, missed and smacked himself on the head. The fly saw this as adding insult to injury.

### **alas, poor Yorick**

бедный Йорик

MEANING: a lament for a dead person or scheme; used as an expression of compassion or sympathy

*Alas, poor Yorick! Your financial pyramid has toppled down.*

ORIGIN: "Alas, poor Yorick. I knew him, Horatio; a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy." This quotation from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (Act III, Sc.1; 1601) is often used ironically, but it was originally Hamlet's sad remark on finding the skull of his old friend, the court jester, in the graveyard.

### **alive and kicking**

жив-здоров; жив курилка

MEANING: active or flourishing

*I had a letter from Rod. He's still very much alive and kicking, working on a farm.*

ORIGIN: The metaphor is from fish selling, when the freshest fish for sale were those just caught and still moving.

### **all animals are equal, but some are more equal than others**

все (звери) равны, но некоторые равнее

MEANING: in reality, not all the people proclaimed equal are able to enjoy equal rights

*There aren't card votes at Westminster, but some votes are more equal than others.*



*You can't find anything in the telephone book because it's filled with alphabet soup.*

ORIGIN: The allusion is to a tinned soup fed to children which contains letters of the alphabet made of pasta.

### **also ran**

вечный неудачник; сошедший с круга

MEANING: someone who is unsuccessful or unimportant  
*Peter felt that he was one of life's also-rans. His education had ended unsuccessfully; he had taken a number of uninteresting and poorly paid jobs.*

ORIGIN: This is a description used in reporting horse-racing results describing any horse which fails to gain one of the first three places.

### **as cool as a cucumber**

спокойный как танк

MEANING: very calm, not nervous or emotional  
*Roslyn was as cool as a cucumber when she got the award from the President of the United States.*

ORIGIN: As early as the 1500s this expression was used to describe calm and composed people. When thermometers were invented, scientists showed that cucumbers are often 10 degrees cooler inside than outside air.

### **as different as chalk and / from cheese**

небо и земля; лёд и пламень

MEANING: the lack of similarity between two people or things despite a superficial resemblance  
*Our relationship works because we are very aware of our differences. We accept that we are chalk and cheese.*

ORIGIN: In the Middle Ages one test of sanity was to see if the patient could taste the difference between chalk and cheese.

### **as pleased as Punch**

довольный как слон; счастлив как ребёнок

MEANING: to feel very happy

*He was as pleased as Punch when we all said how good his cooking was.*

ORIGIN: The phrase alludes to the appearance of Mr. Punch, a character known in England from the time of the Restoration. As his face is carved on wood, it never changes expression and is always beaming.

### **as thick as two (short) planks**

глупый как пробка; тупой как валенок

MEANING: very stupid, unintelligent

*She's a pretty girl but as thick as two short planks.*

ORIGIN: This expression, which can also be shortened to *as thick as two planks*, makes a pun of *thick* which means *stupid* as well as the more normal meaning (i.e. the opposite of *thin*).

### **at the drop of a hat**

в любую минуту / в любой момент

MEANING: right away; at once; without delay; willing at any moment

*Most unemployed people aren't lazy; they would accept work at the drop of a hat.*

ORIGIN: There are many ways to start a race or other sporting event: shoot a gun, wave a flag, and yell "Ready, set, go!" and so on. Years ago someone would drop a hat as the starting signal, and the contest would begin immediately. Today if anyone does anything (not just something athletic) eagerly and on the spur of the moment, we say it's done *at the drop of a hat*.

### **at the end of one's rope / tether**

на (эмоциональном) пределе; дойти до ручки

MEANING: to be tired or annoyed, unable to deal with the situation any more

*I'm at the end of my tether, and if the phone rings once more, I'll scream!*

ORIGIN: A *tether* is a rope used to limit an animal's movements and where it can feed. If the animal reaches the end of the tether, it can't find any more grass to eat, so becomes hungry and unhappy.

### **awake famous**

проснуться знаменитым / знаменитостью

MEANING: to acquire great popularity at a very short time  
*I awoke one morning and found myself famous.*

ORIGIN: The phrase belongs to George Gordon Byron who wrote it in his diary in 1812.

# B

## **back to square one**

от печки; с нуля; начинать заново

MEANING: to go back to the beginning

*I've spent years writing this book, and now I've been told to write it all differently, so it's back to square one, I'm afraid.*

ORIGIN: The phrase comes from games with squares on the playing surface of the board. This appears to have gained currency in the 1930s onwards through its use by British radio football commentators.

## **backhanded compliment**

сомнительный комплимент

MEANING: praise that is expressed in such a way that it is clearly more of a criticism

*He said he liked me a lot better than the last time he met me, which I thought was rather a back-handed compliment.*

ORIGIN: The back of the hand is traditionally associated with scorn or disapproval, the front of the hand is used to pat in a congratulatory gesture.

## **backseat driver**

непрошенный советчик

MEANING: a bossy person who tells another person what to do; a person who gives unwanted advice and directions

*I can fix this computer myself, but she always tries to be a backseat driver.*

ORIGIN: When automobiles became popular in the United States in the 1920s, many rich people rode around

in the backseats of chauffeur-driven cars. The backseat passenger gave orders to the front-seat driver: where to go, what road to take, how fast to drive, and so on. Today *backseat driver* refers to any aggressive person, in or out of a car, who tries to tell others what to do.

### **bag and baggage**

со всеми пожитками / манатками / потрохами

MEANING: the entire belongings of a person departing or departed from a place, usually forever

*She threw him out of the house bag and baggage.*

ORIGIN: As a military term in the past it meant the complete possessions of an army which, in honorable retreat, would go without leaving anything behind for the enemy.

### **baker's dozen**

чёртова дюжина

MEANING: thirteen of anything for the price of twelve

*At the garage sale, we charged 75 cents per baseball card or \$9 for a baker's dozen.*

ORIGIN: Hundreds of years ago some English bakers cheated their customers by baking air pockets into loaves of bread, making them lightweight. In 1266 the English Parliament passed a law that said that bakers who sold underweight bread would be severely punished. To protect themselves bakers began to add an extra loaf to each dozen sold.

### **baptism of fire**

боевое крещение

MEANING: a painful initiation

*I was given a million-dollar project to manage in my first month. It was a real baptism of fire.*

ORIGIN: In France it was traditionally used to describe a soldier's first experience of battle. It may originally

have come from the experience of those martyrs who wished to embrace Christianity formally, but were burnt at the stake before they could be baptized by a priest.

### **bark up the wrong tree**

обратиться не по адресу

MEANING: to direct your attention or efforts towards the wrong person or thing; to have the wrong idea about something

*You're barking up the wrong tree if you think you will be able to influence the judge.*

ORIGIN: During colonial times in America, raccoon hunting was a popular sport. Trained dogs would chase the raccoon up a tree and bark furiously at the base until the hunter came. Sometimes the raccoon could escape to another tree, leaving the dog barking up the wrong tree.

### **batten down the hatches**

задраить люки; принять все меры предосторожности

MEANING: to get ready for trouble; prepare for any emergency  
*We'd better batten down the hatches. The weather service says a tropical storm is headed our way.*

ORIGIN: This is a nautical term that comes from the early 1800s. On a ship, sailors prepared for stormy weather by nailing waterproofed pieces of canvas and wood (*battens*) over the entryways (*hatches*) to the cargo area below the main deck. Today you *batten down the hatches* when you prepare for any kind of trouble.

### **beat about / around the bush**

ходить вокруг да около

MEANING: to talk about things in a roundabout way without giving clear answers or coming to the point  
*Stop beating about the bush and tell me what you came for!*

ORIGIN: This expression goes all the way back to the 1500s when hunters hired people called beaters to drive small animals or the birds out of the bushes so the hunters could get a better shot at them.

### **beat the living daylights out of someone**

избить до полусмерти; живого места не оставить

MEANING: to punish someone with physical violence  
*I'll beat the living daylights out of anyone who scratches my new car!*

ORIGIN: It has been suggested that *daylights* means *eyes* in boxing slang, but it is more probable that the phrase is a corruption of an older threat *to beat the liver and lights out of someone*, the *lights* being the *lungs*.

### **bee's knees**

пуп земли

MEANING: the best, most attractive, talented person  
*I know Phil is quite good-looking, but I wish he wouldn't admire himself in the mirror so much. He obviously thinks he's the bee's knees!*

ORIGIN: Originating in the early nineteenth century, this may be connected with an eighteenth-century saying: *As big as a bee's knee*, a jocular allusion to a small thing or person, but its main attraction seems to be the rhyme and the ludicrous image.

### **before you can / could say Jack Robinson**

в мгновение ока

MEANING: very quickly  
*Before you could say Jack Robinson, he'd taken my wallet and dashed out of the room.*

ORIGIN: It is unknown who Jack Robinson actually was.

### **beggar description**

не поддаваться описанию

MEANING: impossible to express in words

*The sunset that evening was a beauty to beggar all description.*

ORIGIN: Shakespeare says of Cleopatra's beauty: *It beggar'd all description* (Antony and Cleopatra, Act II, Sc. 2)

### **beggars can't be choosers**

бедному и вору всё впору

MEANING: needy people have to take whatever they can get and cannot be concerned about the quality if they cannot afford to buy it for themselves

*Beggars can't be choosers. If you don't have money to go out for a pizza, you'll have to eat it in a cafeteria.*

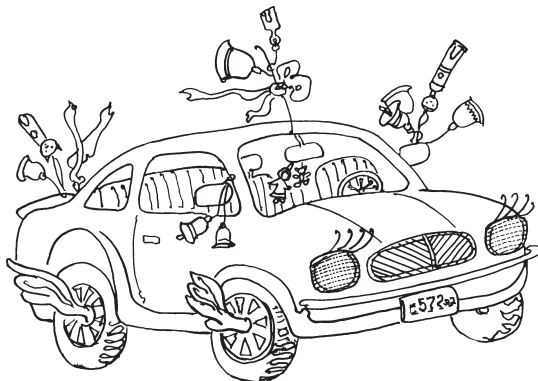
ORIGIN: This proverb has been around since the mid-1500s. It means that people who need something but who have little or no control over the situation can't choose what they get. They have to accept what is offered.

### **bells and whistles**

навороты; приамбасы

MEANING: impressive accessories, especially flashy, high-technology features and frills, which may sometimes be more decorative than necessary

*Your computer software may have all the latest bells and whistles, but is it good value for money?*



ORIGIN: This modern phrase became popular with the development of many kinds of new electronic and computerized equipment. The *bells and whistles* represent all sorts of super high-tech features that you don't really need in a basic model but which make a product more fun to use (and more expensive).

### **best of British**

ни пуха ни пера; желаю удачи

MEANING: used to wish someone well, especially when the speaker doubts someone will succeed  
*I'm off to take my driving test, and I've only had three lessons. — And the best of British to you — you'll need it!*

ORIGIN: A phrase used in World War II, particularly when things were not going well for the British.

### **between the devil and the deep blue sea**

между молотом и наковальней

MEANING: between two great dangers and not knowing what to do; in a very difficult position  
*Glenn had to choose between confessing that he hadn't studied or trying to fake it. He was between the devil and the deep blue sea.*

ORIGIN: In the early 17th century the heavy plank fastened to the side of a vessel as a support for guns was called *the devil*. Sometimes a sailor had to go out onto this plank to do repairs to the boat. In heavy seas he would be in a great danger of falling overboard and drowning because he was *between the devil and the deep blue sea*.

### **between you, me and the lamp-post / gatepost / doorpost / bedpost / post**

между нами (девочками) говоря

MEANING: an expression used with the telling of a secret that the speaker wants only the person being spoken to to know and no one else

*Between you, me and the lamp-post, I think Pete and Sarah's marriage is breaking up.*

ORIGIN: Can be traced to Charles Dickens' novel *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby*, 1839.

### **bimbo**

смазливая девица

MEANING: a young woman who is not very intelligent but is particularly attractive

*Marie is certainly not a bimbo — she's very brainy and works as a scientist.*

ORIGIN: This word was originally used in America in the first part of the last century. It was short for the Italian *bambino* meaning *baby*. However, it wasn't until the 1980s that the word became popular again and found its new meaning of an attractive but stupid young woman. A variation is *himbo* which can be used to describe a man with similar characteristics.

### **birds and the bees**

откуда дети берутся

MEANING: human sexual behavior as explained to children by parents and teachers

*My parents never actually sat down and told me about the birds and the bees.*

ORIGIN: This euphemism is an ironic reference to the traditional indirect method of teaching children about sex by allusion to the mating habits of insects and birds.

### **bite the bullet**

проглотить пилюлю; смириться

MEANING: to prepare for a unpleasant experience; to brace yourself to endure with courage something painful but necessary

*They decided to bite the bullet and pay the extra for the house they really wanted.*

ORIGIN: Many word experts think that this expression came from the 19th century medical practice of giving a wounded soldier a bullet to bite before he was operated on without anesthetics on the battlefield. Biting on the soft lead bullet was the way of dealing with pain. It kept the soldier from screaming, which could distract the surgeon during the operation.

### **bite the dust**

загнуться; приказать долго жить; отдать концы

MEANING: to die; to fall in defeat; to fail to succeed  
*Three hundred more people lost their jobs in the same region when another firm bit the dust.*

ORIGIN: This cliché is actually more than 2,000 years old and comes from a line in Homer's *Iliad*. This saying describes many dying warriors in the Trojan War falling to the earth and *biting the dust*. If people fall with their faces in the dirt, you can think of them getting dust in their mouths. The idiom became popular in English in the mid-1800s, especially in early twentieth-century cowboy and Indian films.

### **blow hot and cold**

семь пятниц на неделе

MEANING: to continually change one's mind about something / someone; to be indecisive; to waver  
*He blows hot and cold on the plan so that I don't know whether he will eventually help us or not.*

ORIGIN: This expression originates from one of the famous fables written by the ancient Greek author, Aesop. The story is about a man who meets a demon (small devil) in a wood. The man blows on his hands to warm them and so the demon invites him home and gives him a bowl of hot soup. When the man starts blowing on his soup to cool it, the demon is terrified and throws him out of the house. The reason is that he is frightened of anything which can blow hot and cold from the same mouth.

### **blue blood**

голубая кровь; аристократ

MEANING: of high or noble birth; an aristocrat; from the upper class of society

*Mr. Rimler is marrying a very rich girl from high society, a real blue blood.*

ORIGIN: Though this expression has been used in English since the early 1800s, it actually comes from an older Spanish saying *sangre azul*, used for those Spaniards who had not intermarried with the dark-skinned Moors. Their blood was called *blue* because the blue veins were conspicuous under their fair skin.

### **blue-chip company**

высококлассная компания

MEANING: a commercial company of high standing, in which it is considered to be profitable and safe to invest; a financially sound company with increasingly good prospects

*This week we've seen spectacular gains , especially among blue chips, famous companies with a history of profit in good and bad economic times.*

ORIGIN: The term is from gambling where a blue chip has the highest value.

### **bolt from the blue**

(как) гром среди ясного неба

MEANING: something sudden, unexpected, and shocking  
*His resignation was a bolt from the blue.*

ORIGIN: This expression has been used since at least the early 1800s. Picture a calm, clear, blue sky. You'd probably be surprised, even startled, if a bolt of lightning suddenly cracked down. In the same way, any big surprise is like lightning shooting out of a clear, blue sky. You just don't expect it to happen.

### **bone of contention**

камень преткновения; яблоко раздора; спорный / трудный вопрос

MEANING: the cause of a quarrel

*We've fought for so long that we've forgotten what the bone of contention was.*

ORIGIN: The image of dogs fighting over a bone has frequently been transferred to human disputes and appeared in John Heywood's *Proverbs* (1562).

### **break a leg**

ни пуха ни пера

MEANING: good luck; do a great job in the show

*On the night of the play, Anne's father told her to break a leg.*

ORIGIN: Saying this to a performer before a show has long been a theatrical tradition. It comes from the old German saying, *Hals- und Beinbruch* (break your neck and leg), and was shortened to just the *leg*. Perhaps it exists because of an old show business superstition that wishing someone good luck might cause just the opposite to happen, so you wish the performer bad luck to assure the opposite of that.

### **bright-eyed and bushy-tailed**

здоровый, бодрый, весёлый, энергичный

MEANING: healthy, cheerful, fit, bright and lively

*Ilsa woke up bright-eyed and bushy-tailed after a good night's sleep.*

ORIGIN: The image is from description of the squirrel, possibly from children's stories in the early twentieth century. It is a rather arch, jocular comment on a person's general condition and spirit.

### **bring home the bacon**

прокормить семью; добиться успеха, победить

MEANING: to support a family by working; to earn a living; to earn or win something of value; to succeed

*Both Richard and Stephanie got jobs to bring home the bacon for their children.*

ORIGIN: There are two theories about where this expression came from. One was from the contest at early American country fairs of chasing after a greased pig. If you caught it, you could take it home as your prize. Another possibility is that it came from a practice in the early 1300s. A baron willed that if any married person in Dunmow, England, swore at the church door that they had not had a single quarrel for a whole year and a day, they would get free side bacon to take home.

### **buck stops here**

я за всё в ответе; отвечать головой; нести ответственность

MEANING: I accept ultimate responsibility  
*A small sign on Harry Truman's desk declared, "The Buck Stops Here," and the reverse of the sign said "I'm from Missouri".*

ORIGIN: The expression is said to have originated with the game of poker, in which a marker (a knife with a buckhorn handle, "the buck") was used to indicate the person whose turn it was to deal. The phrase was popularized in 1949 by US President Harry Truman, who kept a sign with that phrase on his desk in the Oval Office. It refers to the fact that the President has to make the decisions and accept the ultimate responsibility for those decisions. Truman received the sign as a gift from a prison warden, who was also an avid poker player.

### **bug someone**

доставать к-л, раздражать, надоедать

MEANING: to irritate, annoy, and bother someone a lot  
*I wish you would just stop bugging me and leave me in peace.*

ORIGIN: This popular African-American idiom comes from the 1960s and is a handy expression when people

are pestering you. It comes from *baga* and *bugal*, words in West African languages that mean *to annoy*. By the way, in certain situations, *bug* can also mean to wiretap someone's phone so that his or her conversation can be listened in on.

### **bumf**

спам

MEANING: printed information, advertisements, brochures (often unwanted)

*The estate agent sent me some bumf about a house. It said it was "uniquely situated" so I went to see it and find it was next to a motorway!*

ORIGIN: This word was originally 19th-century slang for toilet paper. Today it still has a connection with paper although now it refers to documents, brochures or leaflets of all kinds. Despite the past it is not an impolite word and can be used in any circumstances.

### **bury the hatchet**

заклЮчить мир, помириться; прекратить вражду

MEANING: to settle an argument; end a war; make peace; become friends after being enemies

*Stop fighting, and bury the hatchet!*

ORIGIN: This saying probably comes from Native American nations who would make peace with their enemies by holding a ceremony. They would actually bury tomahawks, hatchets, and other war weapons to show that the fight was over. If war broke out again, they would dig up those weapons. By the end of the 1800s the meaning of *bury the hatchet* was extended to include settling any kind of argument and making friends with your enemy.

### **business as usual**

жизнь продолжается

MEANING: continuing as normal

*The maxim of the British people is "Business as usual."*

ORIGIN: The wartime Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, is responsible for this expression. He first used it in a speech in 1940 during the Second World War, just after London had been bombed heavily by the Germans. He said, “The maxim of the British people is ‘Business as usual’” – meaning that the population would carry on a normal life despite the bombs. Soon notices with the phrase appeared on buildings throughout the city – shops, offices, post offices and banks. Today it is not associated with war, but it is used to describe life continuing as normal despite problems or disasters.

### **business before pleasure**

делу время, а / и потехе час

MEANING: there should be time for work and time for leisure  
*I’m afraid I’ll have to go. Business before pleasure, you know.*

ORIGIN: Another version of the phrase, *Business first, pleasure afterwards*, belongs to W. Thackeray, a 19th-century English writer. The Russian equivalent is attributed to tsar Alexei Mikhailovich (1629–1676). Nowadays the words are usually wrongly interpreted to mean: most of one’s time should be given to work, and only a small part of it to leisure.

### **busman’s holiday**

в отпуске делать то же, что на работе

MEANING: spending your free time doing the same thing you do during working hours  
*Victor went back to his carpentry shop after spending all weekend building out treehouse. What a busman’s holiday!*

ORIGIN: In London, during the late 1800s and early 1900s, buses were pulled by horses. Some bus drivers loved their horses so much that on their days off from work, they would ride on their own buses just to make sure that other bus drivers took good care of the horses. This habit got to be called a *busman’s*

*holiday* and today it can be applied to anybody who does the same thing on free time as he or she gets paid to do at work.

### **butter would not melt in one's mouth**

прикидываться невинной овечкой

MEANING: he or she is too angelic-seeming to be credible  
*Sally looks as if butter wouldn't melt in her mouth, but she can be so cruel.*

ORIGIN: This proverbial saying appeared in John Heywood's collection (1546).

### **buzzword**

популярное словечко / словцо

MEANING: a new word or expression which is fashionable  
*There are so many buzzwords in the music industry, it takes time to learn them all.*

ORIGIN: Examples of Sixties buzzwords are *cool* and *groovy* (very good, enjoyable); examples of Eighties buzzwords are *street cred* (in touch with fashion / ideas / opinions of the young people) and *power dressing* (dressing in clothes which indicate authority / power) and examples of Nineties buzzwords are *green* (not harmful to the environment) and *ozone-friendly* (not harmful to the ozone-layer which protects the earth from the sun). Buzzwords often go out of fashion very quickly.

### **by the skin of one's teeth**

едва, чудом, еле-еле; с большой натяжкой; с горем пополам

MEANING: only just; by a tiny margin  
*England held on by the skin of their teeth to win 11:10.*

ORIGIN: The original phrase from the Bible (Job, 19:20) means a narrow escape suggesting that you escape injury, say, by such a narrow measure that it is as thin as the skin on your teeth, that is, non-existent.

# C

## **carry coals to Newcastle**

ехать в Тулу со своим самоваром

MEANING: to do something unnecessary; to bring something to a place where it is already plentiful

*Taking flowers to the florist's daughter is like carrying coals to Newcastle.*

ORIGIN: There are many coalmines in the English city of Newcastle. Coal is shipped out from this port to other places. Newcastle definitely doesn't need extra coal, so if you carry coals there, you are doing something totally unnecessary. Today the meaning of this expression includes similar situations like taking snowballs to people living near the North Pole.

## **carry the can**

отдуваться

MEANING: to take responsibility or blame for something  
*She suspected that she'd be left to carry the can for her boss's mistakes.*

ORIGIN: This was originally a military expression. A group of soldiers would elect one man, usually of the lowest rank, to fetch beer for everyone. He would carry it in a large can (metal container) which he had to return at the end of the evening. So the man who carried the can took responsibility for it. Now the phrase can be applied to anyone who has to take the responsibility or blame for something – rightly or wrongly.

## **catch 22**

заколдованный круг; уловка 22

MEANING: a situation in which a kind of mad logic prevails, defying any solution

*Homeless people often find themselves in a catch-22 situation: they can't afford lodgings, and employers won't hire them without a fixed abode.*

ORIGIN: The phrase was invented by Joseph Heller for the title of his novel (1961) about US fliers in World War II. Captain Yossarian tries to get out of flying missions on the grounds that he is mentally ill and the doctor confirms that according to regulations, he must ground any bombardier who is crazy. However, the catch is that anyone who wants to get out of flying missions is definitely not crazy.

## **catch someone on the hop**

застать врасплох

MEANING: to catch someone unprepared; to surprise someone  
*The baby caught Derek on the hop – he thought Debbie was just very fat!*

ORIGIN: Just after the Second World War, hop-picking was a popular holiday for working-class Londoners as it was often the only chance they had to enjoy the countryside. It was a cheap family holiday which lasted the whole summer. As most men worked in jobs which gave only a few days holiday a year, they had to invent an excuse in order to go hop-picking. Sometimes the employer discovered the truth and caught a man on the hop, or in other words, caught him picking hops.

## **chattering classes**

гнилая интеллигенция

MEANING: educated people who like to discuss and give their opinions about political and social matters; gossiping and opinionated intellectuals

*Football has recently become a trendy topic among the chattering classes.*

ORIGIN: This is a fairly new phrase which seems to have been started in the quality British newspapers in the 1990s to describe the people who subscribe to common current beliefs and prejudices.

### **chew the fat**

ТОЧИТЬ ЛЯСЫ; ЧЕСАТЬ ЯЗЫКИ; ТРЕПАТЬСЯ, БОЛТАТЬ

MEANING: to have a friendly, informal talk; to chat in a relaxed way

*My friend and I sat up half the night just chewing the fat.*

ORIGIN: In the late 1800s this expression was popular in the British army, and then it came to the United States. One possible origin might be that military and naval people were given tough meat to eat and they had to chew the fat of the meat as they talked. At any rate, if you're just hanging out, talking with your friends in an easy, relaxed way, you're *chewing the fat*.

### **chip off the old block**

ТОЧНАЯ КОПИЯ (РОДИТЕЛЕЙ)

MEANING: a child bearing a strong resemblance in appearance or character to one of the parents

*I never realized how much Felix looks like his father. He's a real chip off the old block.*

ORIGIN: The comparison of the child to a small off-cut from a large piece of wood or stone is found in ancient Greek literature and more recently in a seventeenth century collection of proverbs by John Ray (1670). A block can be of wood or stone. If you chipped off a little piece of it, the chip would resemble the big block — for instance, in color and texture. In the same way, a child (*chip*) might act and look like the parents (*the old block*).

### **chock-a-block**

ДО ОТКАЗА / БИТКОМ НАБИТ

MEANING: completely full / squashed together in a limited space

*London is chock-a-block with tourists at the moment.*

ORIGIN: This expression originates from nautical slang. The word *chock* refers to a ring-like device through which ropes are passed and *block* refers to two pieces or blocks of wood which are pulled together. They are both part of a block and tackle, a mechanism which is used on ships to hoist or lift heavy loads.

### **clapped-out**

в хлам

MEANING: old, worn-out and possibly broken (object); very tired, worn-out (person)

*I feel really clapped-out after the holiday because every day my boyfriend insisted that we swim twenty lengths before breakfast, run ten miles before lunch and walk for three hours in the mountains in the afternoon.*

ORIGIN: This expression can be used to describe either objects such as cars, bicycles, watches, etc., or less usually, people. When using it to describing objects, be careful not to use it simply as a substitute for *broken* as it can only refer to things which are old. If using it to describe a person, it is important to be aware that it is not very polite.

### **claptrap**

ерунда / чепуха на постном масле; чушь собачья

MEANING: insincere, foolish talk / nonsense

*Don't listen to that claptrap. Linda used blue paint because it was the only color she had!*

ORIGIN: This word comes from the theatre of the early 18th century. It referred to any trick that the playwright used to make the audience clap – in other words *a trap for claps*! Today it has completely lost its theatrical associations and is only used to describe opinions or information which give the impression of being important but are in fact worthless.

## cliff-hanger

на самом интересном месте (захватывающая концовка сериала)

MEANING: a situation in which the important result is very much in doubt until the last minute

*The captain announced the ship had hit something and was sinking. There was only one hour to get all the passengers and crew into the lifeboats. No one was sure if it could be done – it was a real cliffhanger.*



ORIGIN: The American actress Pearl White starred in a TV series called “The Perils of Pauline”. Each episode would end with Pauline in a dangerous situation so that the audience would want to watch the next one to see what happened. In one episode Pauline was hanging on the edge of a cliff and this inspired the expression. *Cliffhangers* and *cliffhanger endings* are still used in TV drama series today. The expression can also describe situations in real life which are dramatic and uncertain.

### **close shave**

на волосок (от несчастья)

MEANING: a near disaster; a narrow escape

*He's never had an accident but he's had several close shaves.*

ORIGIN: Literally a close shave is the work of a good barber or a sharp razor. The closer to the skin the beard is cut, the greater the danger of slicing the skin.

### **cold turkey**

резко бросить дурную привычку; завязать с ч-л

MEANING: a method of giving up an addiction, especially to drugs, which is simply to stop the habit without any special help or treatment

*I hit the TV habit cold turkey. I took five books out of the library and covered my set with a blanket.*

ORIGIN: This 20th century American expression describes an instant withdrawal from any kind of habit, such as smoking, alcohol, drugs, or high-fat foods. If you totally quit your harmful behavior without any help, then you quit *cold turkey*. No one is quite sure why the words *cold* and *turkey* were joined this way. According to another explanation, the phrase derives from the plain appearance of a meal of cold turkey as opposed to the bird served hot with festive trimmings.

### **come out / pass with flying colors**

с блеском / блестяще справиться с задачей

MEANING: to achieve a great success

*He passed his exams with flying colors.*

ORIGIN: The image is from the days of sailing ships returning from a successful sea battle flying their flags, known as *colors*.

### **come up to scratch**

соответствовать стандартам; быть на уровне; пройти проверку / испытание

MEANING: to meet the required standard; to pass the test

*Under the new system, we will not continue to employ teachers whose work doesn't come up to scratch.*

ORIGIN: The origin of this phrase lies in the early rules of boxing. The scratch was a line scratched into the centre of the ring which a knocked-down fighter had to crawl to in order to be declared still in the game. If he failed to come to the scratch he was declared beaten.

### **Confucius, he say...**

как сказал Конфуций; как говорится

MEANING: a humorous expression used before relating a traditional wise thought

*Confucius, he say, "You take no umbrella – it rains, you get wet!"*

ORIGIN: Unorthodox grammatical verb forms are used to imitate Chinese grammar.

### **corny**

пошлый, банальный

MEANING: unoriginal due to being overused and sentimental  
*I've written a short story but I don't know how to end it. I was thinking of making the two main characters get married and live happily ever after. – Oh, no, that's a really corny ending – it's been done a hundred times before.*

ORIGIN: This word originally described rural American audiences with simple, unsophisticated tastes. Because the farmers grew corn, they were known as *corn-fed* and the humor they liked came to be known as *corny*. Today you can use the word to describe many things. For example, *corny jokes*, *corny films*, *corny tastes*.

### **cost an arm and a leg**

обойтись в кругленькую сумму; стоить целое состояние

MEANING: very expensive; high-priced, though possibly not worth the cost

*It cost him an arm and a leg to go to Hawaii, but Mr. Wong really needed the vacation.*

ORIGIN: This popular mid-20th-century American expression gets a lot of use as things get more expensive. Naturally, one's arms and legs are priceless, so what this saying implies is that if something is really expensive, then it's like paying for it with one of your limbs.

### **couch potato / a sofa spud**

диванная картошка (любитель смотреть телевизор, жуя и лежа на диване)

MEANING: someone who is very inactive and spends most of their time watching television

*Jane was in danger of turning into a couch potato when she was resting at home after her operation.*

ORIGIN: This expression comes from America. It describes a person who doesn't do much in their free time except watch television. Why *couch*? Because that's where a lot of people sit when they're watching TV. Why *potato*? Because to the person who coined this description, a person who lies around all day and night in front of the television set reminded him of a potato — a dull, lumpy vegetable with eyes.

### **creature comforts**

житейские / маленькие радости

MEANING: material things like good food and accommodation which make life pleasant

*I hate camping. I can't do without my creature comforts.*

ORIGIN: It has been a commonplace since the seventeenth century. In *Nicholas Nickleby*, Charles Dickens played on the meaning of *creature*, that is alcoholic spirits, to pun that Mr. Squeers, the sadistic schoolmaster, had been seeking forgetfulness in creature comforts, which turned out to be brandy and water.

### **cry wolf**

бить ложную тревогу

MEANING: to give a false alarm of danger; to warn of a peril that you know is not real

*Don't worry if my little brother starts screaming that there's a ghost in his room. He always cries wolf.*

ORIGIN: One of Aesop's most famous fables tells of a bored shepherd boy who falsely cried that a wolf was killing his sheep. When people came and found out there was no wolf threatening the sheep, they were annoyed. The shepherd did that once too often; one day when a real wolf came, no one came when he called out, and the wolf ate the sheep.

### **customer is always right**

клиент всегда прав

MEANING: one of the popular phrases now associated with the business of selling through stores

*Rule 1 – the customer is always right. Rule 2 – if the customer is wrong, read Rule 1.*

ORIGIN: The saying is attributed to H. Gordon Selfridge, an American who came to Britain and introduced the idea of the monster department store.

### **cut the Gordian knot**

рассечь / разрубить Гордиев узел

MEANING: to solve a tricky problem with one decisive action; in a strong; simple and effective way

*There was so much fighting between staff, she decided to cut the Gordian knot and sack them all.*

ORIGIN: According to Greek legend, King Gordius of Phrygia tied his wagon to a tree with a complicated knot. Whoever managed to undo it, would rule Asia. Alexander the Great simply slashed the knot with his sword without trying to untie it.

### **cut to the quick**

задеть за живое

MEANING: to hurt someone's feeling very deeply; to be extremely unkind or nasty

*I was cut to the quick by her harsh remarks.*

ORIGIN: Many centuries ago there was an Old English word *cwicu* (today it's *quick*) which referred to the most sensitive flesh on the body, right under the nails on your fingers and toes. The phrase has been in use since the seventeenth century when people started using it to mean more than just cutting someone with a knife or sword. It meant offending a person so deeply with a cutting remark that he felt sharp inner pain as if he had been emotionally stabbed.

### **cutting edge**

передний край, передовой рубеж (развития науки и техники)

MEANING: the forefront of new developments; the most advanced or important position, usually in science and technology

*My brother works in nuclear physics. He's on the cutting edge of some pretty amazing discoveries.*

ORIGIN: The allusion is to the sharp blade of a knife or tool. Just as the cutting edge of a sharp knife makes contact before the rest of the knife when slicing through objects, a highly advanced discovery is said to be on the *cutting edge*. The term has been used in science and technology since the 1950s to describe innovative research and has spread into everyday life to the extent that it is the title of a British television program.

# D

## **die is cast**

жребий брошен

MEANING: the decision is irrevocable; the dice have been thrown already

*From the moment the first shot was fired, the die was cast and war became inevitable.*

ORIGIN: This is a translation of Julius Caesar's words when he crossed the Rubicon to seize power in Italy in 49 BC, meaning that he could not turn back at that point.

## **don't look a gift horse in the mouth**

дарёному коню в зубы не смотрят

MEANING: do not criticize something which is given to you as a gift; take what you've been given without criticism or emphasis on its worth

*When Sandy complained about her present, her dad told her not to look a gift horse in the mouth.*

ORIGIN: This is an ancient saying which appears in many languages and comes from the practice of assessing the age and state of health of a horse by examining its teeth before purchasing.

## **dot your i's and cross your t's**

не упустить детали; уделить внимание мельчайшим подробностям

MEANING: to take great care over the details

*Mrs. Potter wants us to proofread our papers and dot all the i's and cross all the t's.*

ORIGIN: An expression similar to this first appeared in books in the early 1500s. If you want good penmanship,

you'd better be careful with things like the dots over the i's and the lines crossing the t's. Today this widely used saying refers to being extremely thorough by paying close attention to details in whatever you do.

### **double Dutch**

китайская грамота

MEANING: incomprehensible or nonsensical speech

*I couldn't understand what he was saying – it was double Dutch for me.*

ORIGIN: The Dutch were singled out as foreigners to be ridiculed because of the traditional seafaring rivalry between the English and the Dutch.

### **down the hatch**

пей до дна

MEANING: to swallow a drink in one gulp

*Grandma handed me a glass of smelly medicine and said, "Down the hatch."*

ORIGIN: People have used this expression for centuries. A ship's passengers, crew, and cargo pass through an opening in the deck called the *hatch*. Sometime in the mid-1500s a clever toastmaker, probably a sailor, realized that a drink going into a person's mouth was like things going into the hatch of a ship. He lifted a glass to his lips and said, "Down the hatch," and a new toast was born.

### **drive a hard bargain**

настаивать на своём, не уступать в споре; блюсти свои интересы; не идти на уступки в цене; многого хотеть

MEANING: to insist on hard terms in making an agreement that is often to your advantage; to buy or sell at a good price

*I had to trade him three of my best comic books for just one baseball card. He sure drives a hard bargain.*

ORIGIN: This idiom goes back to Greek writings of AD 950. It made its way into English about 500 years later. To *drive* means to vigorously carry through some task; *hard* means tough.

### **drop a clanger**

сморозить; ляпнуть; допустить бестактность

MEANING: to be guilty of an embarrassingly bad mistake, or indiscreet remark or action

*I dropped a clanger at the party when I mentioned Tom's wife — I didn't realize she'd left him.*

ORIGIN: The action has such an impact that it is like letting fall a piece of heavy clanging or ringing metal. It appeared only in the twentieth century in this sense.

### **Dutch courage**

храбрость во хмелю

MEANING: false bravery inspired by alcohol

*He drank a glass of wine for Dutch courage before he went to see his employer about his pay rise.*

ORIGIN: This negative characteristic attributed to the Dutch is in keeping with the seventeenth-century propaganda spread by sailors who regarded the Dutch as rivals. As in most images of the Dutch, this is also pejorative.

# E

## **eat humble pie**

загладить / искупить вину

MEANING: to be very submissive after regretting an action or words

*Last week Charles accused his new secretary of stealing his wallet. But the next day he found it at home, so he had to eat humble pie all week and offer Fiona more money before she agreed to stay!*

ORIGIN: In the Middle Ages *umbles* were the unpleasant but edible parts of a deer which were cooked in a pie. The best deer meat was eaten by the rich, whereas the umble pie was eaten by their servants who were of a lower social class. Over time the word *umble* became confused with the word *humble* which means meek or submissive to give the current expression.

## **eat smb out of house and home**

по миру пустить (разорить тратами на еду и содержание)

MEANING: to be so expensive to feed and keep that the person paying cannot afford it

*Matias grew four inches, and he's eating his parents out of house and home.*

ORIGIN: William Shakespeare used this famous saying in one of his plays around the year 1600. *House* and *home* mean about the same thing, of course. Using them both in one expression doubles the meaning.

### **elementary, my dear Watson**

элементарно, Ватсон

MEANING: an expression used in connection with an explanation that makes something clear and that is obvious to the speaker

*I can't get this tape-recorder to work. Can you help me? – Ah! You've not plugged it in! There you are – elementary, my dear Watson!*

ORIGIN: From the *Sherlock Holmes* stories by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, though this exact phrase is not found in the original texts.

### **even Homer nods**

и на старуху бывает проруха

MEANING: even the greatest, best and wisest of us can't be perfect all the time and can make mistakes

*It was through her oversight that you were not invited. – Small wonder, even Homer nods.*

ORIGIN: Derived from Horace, *De Arta Poetica*, 8 BC; familiar as an English proverb since the seventeenth century.

### **everything but the kitchen sink**

воз и маленькая тележка

MEANING: absolutely everything, even useless, unnecessary items

*We were only going away for the weekend, but Jack insisted on taking everything but the kitchen sink.*

ORIGIN: This expression was born in the early 20th century and became popular after World War II (in the late 1940s). An article in the *Wall Street Journal* (1958) speaks of the military services who want everything in a weapon but the kitchen sink. The kitchen sink is heavy, connected to pipes, and usually bolted down, so it's not easily movable.

# F

## **face the music**

держать ответ

MEANING: to endure the consequences of one's actions; to take what you have coming to you

*When the missing money was noticed, he chose to disappear rather than face the music.*

ORIGIN: This American saying was common in the mid-1800s. There are two theories about its origin. It could have come from the world of theatre. Sometimes an audience didn't like a show. It took courage for a performer to stand on the stage and face the hostile audience and also the orchestra pit (*the music*). This idiom could also have come from the military world. If a soldier did something dishonorable, he was often dismissed from the army as the band played, facing the music.

## **fall on one's feet**

удачно / мягко приземлиться

MEANING: to be lucky in the face of numerous dangers and pitfalls

*Richard takes the most awful risks, but he always seems to land on his feet.*

ORIGIN: The comparison is with the well-known ability of the cat to land on its feet after a fall or leap. The expression was mentioned in John Ray's proverb collection of 1678.

### **famous last words**

надо же такое сказать / придумать; подумать только;  
запоминается последнее

MEANING: a sarcastic response to a foolish statement that suggests that the speaker doesn't know what he or she is talking about

*Our music teacher said that we were sure to win the state choral championship — famous last words.*

ORIGIN: It is thought that people in the military made this phrase popular during World War II (in the 1940s) and that other people began using it after that. Throughout history, people have made declarations that were later proven to be untrue and perhaps even silly to have been said in the first place. Simpleminded statements were sometimes referred to as *famous last words of history*. The phrase was shortened to *famous last words*.

### **feet of clay**

КОЛОСС НА ГЛИНЯНЫХ НОГАХ

MEANING: a serious flaw in the character of a person of high status; a hidden fault of character; a weak point

*In American history we learned that many presidents had feet of clay.*

ORIGIN: In the Bible (Daniel, 2:31-32), the king of a great empire once dreamed of a statue with a head of gold, a body of silver and brass, legs of iron, and feet of iron and clay. The statue broke and its pieces blew away in the wind. The king's prophet interpreted the dream to mean that the empire would eventually break up. Even today, people who are highly regarded may have secret flaws of character (*feet of clay*) that could ruin their reputation.

### **fiddle while Rome burns**

пир во время чумы

MEANING: to waste your time on trifles or show complete indifference while a disaster is happening

*The governor fiddled while Rome burned, doing nothing about crime, poverty, and pollution.*

ORIGIN: The Roman historian Suetonius tells how in AD 64 the Emperor Nero instigated the burning of Rome, then sat watching the spectacle from a high tower and played his lyre (*fiddle*).

### **filthy lucre**

презренный металл

MEANING: money

*Inside that safe there were packets of lovely, filthy lucre.*

ORIGIN: This biblical phrase is St Paul's term for money gained dishonestly. In Timothy (3:5) he lists the qualities needed in a bishop: not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre.

### **finders keepers (losers weepers)**

что (с воза) упало, то пропало

MEANING: whoever finds something has the right to keep it: said when someone, especially a child, finds something by chance

*Finders keepers, I don't have to give the pen back, do I, Mum?*

ORIGIN: It originates from the children's rhyming slang.

### **fine kettle of fish**

хорошенькое дело

MEANING: a difficult situation; a mess

*That's a fine kettle of fish — the car won't start and I have to leave in five minutes.*

ORIGIN: This refers to a Scottish border custom of setting up a picnic, complete with fish kettle (a container for cooking fish), by a salmon river so that the catch could be cooked on the spot. Presumably these were hectic noisy affairs which soon became connected with confusion.

## **finger in every pie**

каждой бочке затычка

MEANING: to have a part in something; to be involved in numerous activities, often in a meddlesome way

*Mrs. Jones likes to have a finger in every pie in the village.*



ORIGIN: The person who made up this saying might have been thinking of people who can't decide what part they want, so they stick a finger in every pie to get a taste of each. This metaphor was in use in the sixteenth century. In Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* the Duke of Buckingham says of Cardinal Wolsey: *No man's pie is freed from his ambitious fingers.*

## **finishing touch**

последний штрих

MEANING: the last step towards the completion of your creation  
*The room still needed a few finishing touches.*

ORIGIN: The phrase has been in use since the eighteenth century and comes from painting where the artist is romantically thought to add the last careful stroke of the brush to achieve perfection.

### **five o'clock shadow**

щетина на лице (к концу дня)

MEANING: the beard which grows in a day after a man shaves in the morning

*My beard grows faster than other men's – I always get a five o'clock shadow by two in the afternoon!*

ORIGIN: The word *shadow* refers to the way in which a slight growth of beard turns a man's chin slightly blue.

### **flotsam and jetsam**

всякий хлам; отребье, сброд

MEANING: a collection of mostly worthless and useless objects; odds and ends; rubbish and refuse; numbers of poor, wandering people of low status

*I'm clearing out my room of all the flotsam and jetsam.*

ORIGIN: The words *flotsam* and *jetsam* date from the early 1500s. Flotsam means all the wreckage and cargo floating in the ocean after a shipwreck. Jetsam is cargo and equipment floating in the water that was thrown overboard to lighten a ship in danger of sinking. By the 19th century these words meant any kind of junk or debris on land or sea, thrown out or not. The near-rhyming sound of the words helped make this idiom popular.

### **fly-by-night**

жулик, мошенник, перекаати-поле; однодневка, шарашкина контора

MEANING: a swindler; an unreliable person who settles briefly to some activity, then departs creating problems for the people left behind; selling for quick profit, then disappearing

*The store where I bought that defective computer was a fly-by-night operation.*

ORIGIN: *Fly-by-night* was an ancient term that described a woman who was thought to be like a witch. Witches were supposed to fly at night on brooms, and the

term came to mean anyone who flies hurriedly from an activity. In the 1800s this expression was made up to describe a person or business that sneaked away in the middle of the night to avoid paying bills or making good on promises to customers.

### **follow one's nose**

идти прямо, не сворачивая с пути

MEANING: to go straight ahead in the same direction

*When he asked me the way to the cafeteria, I told him to follow his nose.*

ORIGIN: This saying was being used as early as the 15th century, maybe even earlier. Your nose is in the middle of your face, pointing straight ahead of you. So, if you *follow your nose* you proceed directly ahead.

### **footloose and fancy free**

свободный как ветер / птица

MEANING: not attached to anyone; not involved with anyone romantically; free

*He doesn't have a girlfriend right now. He's just footloose and fancy-free.*

ORIGIN: In the 16th century, *fancy* meant love and *fancy-free* meant that you weren't in love with anyone. In the late 17th century, *footloose* meant you were free to go anywhere. Today the expression means you're not bound to any one place, job, or person.

### **forewarned is forearmed**

предупрежден – значит, вооружён

MEANING: if you know about something in advance you can prepare yourself

*Apparently Simon has some criticisms of my book. Still, forewarned is forearmed.*

ORIGIN: This translates a Latin motto: *Praemonitus praemunitus*, and has been current in English since the sixteenth century.

## **freebie**

халява

MEANING: something which is given free, often in return for possible favors in the future

*I work as a journalist for a magazine about wine. The salary is quite low but there are lots of freebies. Most weeks I'm sent two or three bottles of wine by shops who want me to write articles about them.*

ORIGIN: This expression was originally associated only with journalists. As part of a promotion for a record, book, film or play, journalists are entertained with parties and given free samples and promotional material. Although there is no charge for these things the promoters will expect the journalists to repay them by providing free publicity in newspapers and magazines.

It can now be used more widely to refer to other situations in which something is given free with the hope of a response from the receiver. For example, if you buy a magazine and find a *freebie* inside (a sachet of shampoo perhaps) the manufacturer who has provided it hopes you will buy his product.

## **from the sublime to the ridiculous**

от великого до смешного (один шаг)

MEANING: from normal things to absurdity

*There is only one step from the sublime to the ridiculous.*

ORIGIN: This is a quote from *Age of Reason* by Tom Paine (1794). Napoleon also took it as a favorite saying as he was an admirer of Paine's work. After the retreat from Moscow in 1812, Napoleon said it to de Pradt, his ambassador in Poland.

## **fuddy-duddy**

зануда; старомодный человек

MEANING: someone or something which is very old-fashioned / conservative / boring

*His students think Professor Jones is an old fuddy-duddy.*

ORIGIN: In the past, men who worked in the church were often qualified as Doctors of Philosophy as well as Doctors of Divinity. If a man were both, the letters after his name were PhD, DD. Naturally a clergyman was very conservative in his behavior and attitudes and so the letters PhD, DD led to the invention of the word *fuddy-duddy*. It is important to remember that it is not regarded as a compliment.

### **full of beans**

полный сил и энергии; в приподнятом настроении; бить через край (об энергии)

MEANING: high-spirited and energetic; lively and happy  
*He's been on holiday and he's come back full of beans and bursting with ideas.*

ORIGIN: Beans were once a staple food for the poor; therefore a well-fed person might be full of beans and ready to undertake demanding tasks with relish. This lively expression has been bouncing around since 1800s.

### **full steam ahead**

на всех парáх; что есть мóчи

MEANING: to proceed with all possible speed and power  
*The captain of the team shouted, "Full steam ahead!" to get his tired players out onto the field.*

ORIGIN: In the early days of trains, about 150 years ago, locomotives were powered by steam engines. Ocean liners crossed the seas propelled by steam. There was even a car that ran on steam. When the captain of a ship or the engineer of a train shouted, "Full steam ahead!" it meant "Put the steam boiler up to maximum pressure so we can go faster." Today you can use this expression while working on any project. The opposite of *full steam ahead* is to *run out of steam* when you're exhausted and can't go another step.

# G

## **get cold feet**

струхнуть, струсить, испугаться

MEANING: a fear of doing something; a loss of nerve or confidence; second thoughts

*Gerry wanted to ask Lynette to the party, but he got cold feet.*

ORIGIN: Since the early 1800s people have been saying that someone who lost his courage had cold feet. Maybe it came from the idea of soldiers running away from battle. Fear can cause a person to feel quickly chilled, especially in the feet. Also, *hot* has always suggested eagerness to do something. A *hot-blooded* person, for instance, is always ready for a fight or an adventure. So, it's easy to see how *cold feet* can suggest cowardice and fear.

## **get into the swing of things**

войти в курс дела; освоиться

MEANING: to become accustomed to routine activities

*Barrie didn't join in many activities at first, but now she's getting in the swing of things.*

ORIGIN: In the 1500s the phrase, *in full swing*, meant to be very active in something. *Swing* could have come from the motion of a children's swing or a clock pendulum. In the 1800s a new expression developed that was based on the old one *get into the swing of things*. That meant getting involved with whatever was going on, especially socially.

### **get the sack**

потерять работу; быть уволенным

- MEANING: to be fired, dismissed; to lose one's job  
*I had a heavenly job at Heavenly Hamburgers, but the boss gave me the sack.*
- ORIGIN: This phrase comes from a similar French saying current in the 17th century. In those days workmen who traveled around from job to job carried all their tools in a sack. If a man was fired, he was told to get his sack, pack up his tools, and move on.

### **give me five**

дай пять

- MEANING: to slap a person's hand as a hearty greeting or a sign of solid agreement  
*My little cousin always yells, "Give me five!"*
- ORIGIN: Five in this 20th-century African-American expression refers to fingers on your hand. Giving someone your five fingers (and your palm, too) is a common gesture when meeting. This way of saying hello, showing harmony, or celebrating victory comes from a style of communication used in West Africa.

### **give smb a wide berth**

обходить за версту; сторониться; избегать встречи

- MEANING: to take care to avoid someone or something  
*After Tom got Bob into trouble, Bob gave him a wide berth.*
- ORIGIN: In nautical language, this was an order to sailing ships to keep a suitable distance between themselves and other ships, especially those riding at anchor and liable to swing around.

### **give someone short shrift**

быстро / легко отделаться от к-л

- MEANING: to give someone very little of one's time due to impatience or annoyance

*His new secretary spends ages with other customers, but when I go she gives me short shrift.*

ORIGIN: In the Middle Ages a prisoner who had been condemned to death was allowed a short time to confess to a priest before the execution. The Old English word for confession was *shrift* and so *short shrift* was the short confession that the prisoner made in order to receive forgiveness from God.

### **give someone the cold shoulder**

в упор не видеть; игнорировать

MEANING: to treat someone in a cold way; to snub / shun someone

*Don't bother to ask Mr. Brown to help with the charity event — he always gives everyone the cold shoulder.*

ORIGIN: This expression is thought to come from a way of showing a guest he was not wanted. The cold shoulder is the leftover meat, given in rich houses in the past to the inferior or unwelcome guest who was not considered worthy of a specially cooked meal.

### **give your eyeteeth for something**

всё на свете отдать; всем пожертвовать ради ч-л

MEANING: to want something very badly; to be willing to give up something valuable to get something else

*I'd give my eyeteeth to own a motorcycle like that.*

ORIGIN: Some people think eyeteeth got their name in the 1500s because the nerves of these teeth are close to the eyes. Eyeteeth are important because they're used for biting and chewing. If you want something so much that you are willing to sacrifice your eyeteeth for it, that thing must be extremely important to you. A similar expression is *to give your right arm* for something.

### **go AWOL**

уйти в самоволку

- MEANING: to leave work or duties without permission  
*Private Smith went AWOL last Wednesday. Now he's in a military prison.*
- ORIGIN: This acronym for *absent without leave* was originally a military usage, but is now used in other situations.

### **go fly a kite**

проваливать; сваливать; убираться прочь / вон

- MEANING: to go away, to leave; stop bothering me  
*When he asked for her help, she told him to go fly a kite.*
- ORIGIN: Imagine you're trying to do homework, and someone is really annoying you. There are a lot of expressions that you could shout at him that are similar to *Go fly a kite! Go jump in a lake! Go climb a tree! Go fry an egg!* You are telling the kid that he is a pest, and you are commanding him to go away and do something else. Flying a kite is an activity that should keep him busy so that you can get your work done.

### **go out on the town**

гульнуть по полной программе; разгуляться

- MEANING: to go out drinking or dining or to see a show; enjoy yourself at bars, restaurants, etc. in the evening  
*She stayed in her hotel room while the others went out on the town.*
- ORIGIN: The phrase is often said with a cynical tone when someone is seen to be out enjoying themselves.

### **go west**

приказать долго жить; отдать концы; прийти в негодность; отправиться к праотцам / на тот свет

- MEANING: to die or become lost  
*My watch went west when I accidentally dropped it on a concrete floor.*

ORIGIN: More recently the phrase has come to imply going mad or losing your senses. The allusion is to the sun which travels west throughout the day and then sets.

### **gobbledegook**

абракадабра; тарабарщина; непонятный язык

MEANING: complicated / obscure / meaningless language (written or spoken)

*This gobbledegook sounds unintelligible to me!*

ORIGIN: This word was invented by Maury Maverick, an American politician. He was very tired of language which was unnecessarily complicated and hard to understand and so decided to think of a name to describe it. In English the sound a turkey makes is *gobble* and the image of this stupid bird making a sound no one can understand gave Maverick the idea for *gobbledegook*.

### **goody two-shoes**

паинька

MEANING: a person who thinks he or she is perfect or tries to be

*Tamika is such a Goody Two-shoes that everyone hates her.*

ORIGIN: In the middle 1700s there was a nursery tale called *The History of Little Good Two-Shoes*. In it, a little girl who owned only one shoe was given another one. She went all over, showing off her pair of shoes, saying, "Two shoes." Today a person who thinks he or she is perfect is sarcastically described as a *Goody Two-shoes*, after the title character of that book. A similar phrase is *goody-goody*.

### **grasp the nettle**

пойти на риск

MEANING: to deal with the problem quickly and directly though it may require some courage



*I borrowed Harry's best suit for a job interview. Unfortunately, afterwards I spilt black ink on it and now it's ruined. — My advice is to grasp the nettle and tell Harry what's happened.*

ORIGIN: A nettle is a plant which grows wild and can sting if touched. The only way to avoid being hurt is to take hold of it quickly and grasp it firmly. Obviously it takes some courage.

### **grey eminence / éminence grise** серый кардинал

MEANING: the power behind the throne  
*Although he never became a minister, he was the party's éminence grise for 15 years.*

ORIGIN: Aldous Huxley popularized the phrase when he wrote *Grey Eminence* (1941). This title was a translation of the nickname of the Capuchin monk who was secret adviser to Cardinal Richelieu in seventeenth-century France.

### **grin like a Cheshire cat** улыбаться от уха до уха; рот до ушей

MEANING: to grin a broad smile

*What have you got to look so happy about, walking round here grinning like a Cheshire cat?*

ORIGIN: The ancient reference to the grinning cats of Cheshire appears in Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* where the Duchess tells Alice that the cat is grinning because: *It is a Cheshire cat.*

### **gutter press**

бульварная / жёлтая пресса

MEANING: the tabloid newspapers, especially the more sensational ones

*The gutter press was full of stories of the actress's divorce today.*

ORIGIN: There has been in Britain a long tradition of associating less scrupulous journalists with sewers and gutters.

# Н

## **hard and fast**

жёсткий, строгий (о правилах, законах)

MEANING: strictly according to the rules

*The rule isn't hard-and-fast but we expect you to obey it anyway.*

ORIGIN: This phrase is nearly always used in the negative. The original reference was to a ship that was immobilized either because it was in dry dock or because it had run aground and was fast or stuck.

## **have a bee in one's bonnet**

зациклиться на ч-л; быть одержимым идеей

MEANING: to have a crazy idea; to be obsessed with something  
*Mr. Davis thinks he can teach us the trombone. He must have a bee in his bonnet.*

ORIGIN: This 16th-century expression was originally *to have a head full of bees*, but it changed to *bee in one's bonnet* in Robert Herrick's "Mad Maid's Song", a poem written in 1648. It sounds better this way because of alliteration – both words beginning with the same letter. If you have a crazy idea and can't talk about anything else, it's like having a bee stuck in your hat.

## **have a butchers at something**

взглянуть, посмотреть

MEANING: to look

*Can I have a butchers at the newspaper? That one has lots of interesting stories about people's private lives. I love reading gossip.*

ORIGIN: This expression comes from cockney rhyming slang. The original phrase is *butcher's hook* which rhymes with *look*. It is always used in its shortened form.

### **have one's cake and eat it too**

и волки сыты, и овцы целы; и на ёлку влезть, и не уколоться;  
и невинность соблюсти, и капитал приобрести

MEANING: to spend or use something up but still have it; to have two things when you must choose one  
*You can either go to a movie or get pizza, but you can't have your cake and eat it too.*

ORIGIN: This saying started sometime in the 1540s. Once you've eaten a piece of cake, you don't have it anymore. So you have to make a decision to eat or to save it. In the same way, money that you've spent is money that you no longer have in your pocket. You have to choose what to do with what you have. The original version of this expression is *you can't eat your cake and have it too*.

### **head and shoulders above someone**

на голову выше; намного превосходить

MEANING: far superior; much better than  
*When it comes to catching fish, Lew is head and shoulders above everyone else.*

ORIGIN: When it was first used in the 1800s, this saying referred to height: a very tall person towers over a very short one. But over the years the meaning has been stretched to include any skill one has that is better than someone else's. So a five-foot person may be head and shoulders above a six-foot person in math, tap dancing, and writing stories.

### **Heath Robinson**

чудо морское

MEANING: strange-looking / appearing to be homemade or improvised (used about machinery / vehicles)

*Bob's father wouldn't buy him a VW for his birthday so Bob built himself a Heath Robinson car out of a bath, a motor bike engine and six bicycle wheels! He was really pleased with the result.*

ORIGIN: W. Heath Robinson was a British artist who lived from 1872 to 1944. He became famous for his incredible cartoon drawings about inventors and their mad inventions. Today his name entered the English language to describe any machinery or contraption which looks like part of one of his cartoons.

### **highway robbery**

грабёж среди бела дня

MEANING: an extremely high price or charge for something  
*Three pounds for an orange juice? It's highway robbery!*

ORIGIN: During the time of William Shakespeare and the early 16th century, it was common for travelers on the open road to be held up and robbed by armed highwaymen. With time, the phrase *highway robbery* came to be associated with charges for goods and services that were so expensive that the buyer felt they were being robbed by the seller.

### **Hobson's choice**

принудительный ассортимент

MEANING: a situation in which there appears to be a choice when actually there is none at all  
*The menu looks very varied but it's always Hobson's choice. They never have anything available but fish and chips!*

ORIGIN: This expression was inspired by an Englishman called Thomas Hobson who lived in Cambridge during the early 17th century. He earned his living by working as a liveryman, hiring out horses to many of the university students. To make sure that every horse was used equally Hobson invented a special

system. When the customer came to the stables, Hobson insisted that he chose the horse nearest the door. So although there were in theory many horses to choose from, in reality there was only one choice.

### **hold the fort**

остаться в лавке; нести вахту; стоять на страже;  
охранять, сторожить

MEANING: to temporarily be responsible for watching over a place; to fight off trouble or to keep watch

*Our teacher was late, so the teacher next door held the fort in our room until he showed up.*

ORIGIN: This expression comes from the military. It is widely used in books and movies about the old West. Often when a fort was being attacked on the frontier or during the Civil War in America, the soldiers defending it were told, "Hold the fort. Don't give up. Help is on its way." Today you can *hold the fort* by watching the children in someone's house until a parent returns or by taking care of a store while the owner's away.

### **household word / name**

расхожее / популярное / широко известное имя /  
название (человека, компании, продукта)

MEANING: a person, company, product etc. in the public eye whose name is famous and known by everybody

*Surely you've heard of Terry Wogan and his talk show! His name's a household word with British television viewers.*

ORIGIN: The expression came with the growth of advertising when manufacturers sought to make their product's name familiar to everyone.

### **hue and cry**

шум-гам; бурный протест

MEANING: loud and outspoken protest; an uproar, indignation or fuss

*There was a great hue and cry when it was announced that the factory would be reducing staff.*

ORIGIN: The medieval expression meant an obligation on every person witnessing a crime or called to help. He or she had to take part in the hue and cry or loud pursuit of the wrongdoer. Hue is from Old French *huer* meaning *to shout*.



### **in someone's bad / black books**

в чёрном списке

MEANING: to be out of favor

*Ever since he forgot about her birthday, he has been in her black books.*

ORIGIN: The original expression referred to *black books* and meant literally a book which contained a list of disgraced persons, such as was kept by some Oxford colleges in the eighteenth century.

### **in the altogether**

в чём мать родила

MEANING: a euphemism for altogether naked

*He was just standing there in the altogether.*

ORIGIN: The phrase dates from the end of the nineteenth century.

### **in the limelight**

в центре внимания

MEANING: at the center of attention

*James loves to be in the limelight. Wait until he sees his picture on the front page.*

ORIGIN: All theatres today have powerful electric spotlights that throw bright beams of light on featured performers. In many theatres, beginning in the 1840s, the beam was created by heating lime, a form of calcium oxide, until it produced brilliant white light. A strong lens directed it onto the dancer, juggler, actor, or singer onstage. Anyone *in the limelight* was the center of the audience's attention.

Today, we say that a person who gets a lot of attention, especially from the media, is *in the limelight*.

### **in the nick of time**

в последний момент; в последнюю минуту

MEANING: just at the exact right time; almost too late but still soon enough; at the precise moment required

*Luckily David backed up his crucial files in the nick of time. A minute later, his computer crashed.*

ORIGIN: More than three centuries ago, some records and accounts were kept by cutting little V-shaped notches into sticks of wood with sharp knives. For instance, every time you owed a certain amount of money to a merchant, the stick would be notched. Every time you scored a point in a game, your team's stick would be notched. The stick was called a tally, and the precise notches were called *nicks*. If, in a competitive sport, one team won the game by one point at the last possible second of play, they would have won in the *nick of time*.

### **it takes two to tango**

одному/в одиночку не справиться; без напарника не обойтись

MEANING: two people are required to accomplish this deed  
*It takes two to tango. Who was your accomplice?*

ORIGIN: In the United States in the 1920s, the Latin American dance called the tango became popular, and so did this expression. Just as it takes two dancers to do the tango, there are certain activities that need the cooperation of two people in order to work. For many books, one person writes the words and another draws the pictures. There are a lot of other activities in which *it takes two to tango*.

### **it's all Greek to me**

китайская грамота; тёмный лес (ничего не понимать)

MEANING: too difficult or impossible to understand

*The doctors were discussing my illness, but what they were saying was Greek to me.*

ORIGIN:

William Shakespeare used this phrase in one of his plays, *Julius Caesar*. In the play, which takes place in 44 BC, a Roman who spoke only Latin said that he had heard another man speaking Greek, but he could not understand what he was saying. It was *Greek to him*. The expression caught on. Today, if you don't understand something you've heard or read because it is so complicated or technical, then it's *Greek to you*.

# J

## **jack of *all* trades**

мастер на все руки

MEANING: a person who is capable of doing many different kinds of jobs, who is skilled in many ways

*Our handyman is a jack-of-all-trades. He can fix anything.*

ORIGIN: A worker who is capable of doing many craft-type tasks well has been called a *jack-of-all-trades* since the 1600s. *Jack* is an informal word for *trade laborer*.

## **jack of *all* trades (but master of none)**

мастер-ломастер

MEANING: a person who does many different kinds of jobs but who is not expert at any of them

*How come Joe did such a sloppy job? — He's a jack of all trades.*

ORIGIN: Much later *master of none* was added to the original, signifying that a person who does everything may be mediocre in all skills. The longer version started being used in the latter half of the 19th century.

## **jet set**

«верхние десять тысяч»

MEANING: active, fashionable people with expensive tastes who travel widely for business and pleasure and enjoy a life of luxury

*Don't go to Cannes in the summer months for a family holiday — unless you want to get in with the jet set, of course!*

ORIGIN: *Jet* refers to jet planes. *Set* is a group of people. After the introduction of travel by swift jet planes in the late 1950s, the term *jet set* caught on to describe rich and fashionable people who rarely stayed in one place for any length of time. They were always flying off to a party in Hollywood, or to a luxurious home in Spain. Today, to be a member of a jet set, you just have to be a member of high society. The rhyming words have caught the popular imagination and made this a widely used phrase.

### **jump on the bandwagon**

примазаться / примкнуть (к успешному начинанию / делу)

MEANING: to join or give support to a political party, or a person or movement which seems to be assured of success  
*Last year nobody liked my idea of a school carnival. Now everyone wants to jump on the bandwagon.*

ORIGIN: Many years ago candidates for political office in the United States often rode through town in horse-drawn wagons on which a band was playing music to attract a crowd. If the candidate was popular, people would jump up onto his bandwagon to show their support.

### **jump the gun**

опережать события; забегать вперед; бежать впереди паровоза

MEANING: to do or say something before you should; to act prematurely or hastily  
*I couldn't wait to give my mother her Mother's Day gift, so I jumped the gun and gave it to her a week early.*

ORIGIN: In the early 1900s this expression was *to beat the pistol*. It referred to someone starting a race before the starter's pistol was fired. Later the saying changed to *jump the gun*, perhaps because of the repetition of the *u* sound in the middle of *jump* and *gun*.

## **junk food**

вредная пища

MEANING: unhealthy food which has many additives and high fat content

*I've decided to give up junk food. I'm going to eat healthy meals instead, lots of fresh vegetables, whole-meal bread and brown rice.*

ORIGIN: *Junk* is another word for rubbish. It comes from the Latin word *juncos* meaning rush, a type of plant which used to be made into rope. Originally *junk* was used by sailors to describe old pieces of rope, and eventually the word became associated with anything old and generally unwanted. Therefore *junk food* is literally rubbish food. It is used to describe food which is bought from take-away shops and supermarkets and eaten with little or no preparation. This type of food usually has very low nutritional value.

# K

## **keep up with the Joneses**

быть не хуже чем у людей; не отставать от других

MEANING: make sure that you are not outdone in wealth, smartness or possessions by your neighbors  
*Marcia is always trying to keep up with the Joneses. When she found that all her friends had a car, she immediately bought one oneself. It was such a silly thing to do.*

ORIGIN: In 1913 a popular comic strip called *Keeping up with the Joneses* appeared in many American newspapers. The cartoon was about the experiences of a newly married young man, and the cartoonist based it on his own life. He chose the name *Jones* because it was a popular name in America. The name of the comic strip became a popular expression that meant to try hard to follow the latest fashion and live in the style of those around you.

## **kick the bucket**

коньки откинуть / отбросить; сыграть в ящик; дуба дать; отдать концы

MEANING: to die  
*In the final scene of the movie, the hero kicked the bucket.*

ORIGIN: This expression is always thought of as humorous and is generally used to make people laugh. However two theories to explain its origin are

not funny at all. The first theory is that the phrase comes from the old method of killing pigs at a market. The dead animal would be hung upside down and its feet tied to a length of wood known as a bucket. The pig's feet would therefore knock or kick against the bucket. The other theory comes from a method of committing suicide by standing on a bucket with a noose of rope around the neck. The person kicked the bucket away in order to hang himself.



### **knee-high to a grasshopper**

мелочь пузатая

MEANING: very young and, therefore, very short

*Mr. Fernandez always reminds me that he knew me when I was just knee-high to a grasshopper.*

ORIGIN: Always jocular, this American expression was first recorded in 1814 as *knee-high to a toad*. *Grasshopper* caught on about 1850 because they definitely have knees, and the saying stuck. To come up to the knee of a grasshopper, one would be less than an inch tall.

### **kowtow**

лебезить, заискивать, угодничать; стоять на задних лапках (перед к-л)

MEANING: to behave humbly and to obey someone without question

*My boss expects me to kowtow to him all the time.*

ORIGIN: This expression was brought back from China by early European explorers. It comes from the two

Mandarin words *kou* (strike) and *tou* (head). The literal meaning is *kneel down before a superior and touch the ground with one's head*. Today the expression implies that someone's behavior is too meek or humble so it cannot be used as a compliment.

# L

## **labor of love**

бескорыстный труд; для души; по велению сердца

MEANING: work done not for money but for love or a sense of accomplishment

*He didn't get paid for painting the nursing home. It was a labor of love.*

ORIGIN: In the New Testament of the Bible there is a phrase about work done for pleasure without profit, *your work of faith and labor of love*. The English expression *labor of love* became popular around the seventeenth century, when many people worked at something because they loved doing it and not for money. Also, *labor* and *love* both begin with the letter *l*, and that alliteration helped make the expression easy to remember.

## **lame duck**

хромая / подстреленная утка (о бесперспективном политике)

MEANING: an elected official in the last days of their time on the job; an ineffectual person who cannot function socially or in the workplace

*In the last year of their secondary terms, American presidents are lame ducks.*

ORIGIN: The original *lame duck* was said to have been a London stockbroker in Exchange Alley, home

of the stock market in the eighteenth century, who lost all his money and waddled out of the Alley.

### **land of milk and honey**

молочные реки, кисельные берега

MEANING: a place abundant in food and all human needs

*People in poorer parts of the world still look on the States as the land of milk and honey.*

ORIGIN: These words from the Bible form part of the Lord's promise to Moses about his chosen people: *And I am come to deliver them out of the land of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey.*

### **last straw**

последняя капля (переполнившая чашу терпения)

MEANING: one hardship too many, the final extra burden which makes everything intolerable

*That last mistake was the straw that broke the camel's back.*

ORIGIN: The seventeenth-century version seems to have been the last feather that breaks the horse's back. In *Dombey and Son* (1848), Charles Dickens speaks of: *The last straw that broke the camel's back*, but the simple phrase *the last straw* is now part of the language.

### **lay it on thick**

хватить через край; перегнуть палку; переборщить

MEANING: to flatter excessively or make excuses or punish; exaggerate, especially when praising or criticizing

*John gave a good talk at the conference, but Dawson was laying it on thick when he spoke of "an unforgettable experience."*

ORIGIN: The phrase suggests that rather than just one layer of flattery, etc., we get extra doses. Perhaps this cliché was originally an extension of the image of buttering up (flattering excessively).

### **lead someone up the garden path**

водить за нос; обвести вокруг пальца; провести

MEANING: to deceive someone

*He realized that she had been leading him up the garden path and had no intention of marrying him.*

ORIGIN: Early in the twentieth century this seems to have mainly sexual implications, the idea being that a man would lure a girl into the garden for seduction.

### **left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing**

левая рука не ведаёт / не знает, что делает правая

MEANING: lack of coordination and communication in a group or company

*I was sent the same letter from two different departments. I get the feeling the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing.*

ORIGIN: The notion is from the Bible from (Matthew, 6:3) which, however, had a different meaning from the one that has evolved: *Let not thy right hand know what thy left hand doeth: that thy alms may be in secret.* The injunction was to be deliberately discreet about your charity.

### **let the cat out of the bag**

выдать секрет / тайну; проболтаться

MEANING: to reveal a secret by mistake

*I hid the money from the bank robbery in Gertie Gossip's house and told her to keep it a secret. But a week later she let the cat out of the bag and told her boyfriend by mistake.*



ORIGIN: Many country fairs used to sell piglets which were put in bags so that they could be carried home. Unfortunately some of the traders were not honest and put a cat, which was less valuable, into the bag instead of a piglet. It wasn't until the customer returned home that the cat was let out of the bag and the secret was revealed.

### **lie low**

затаиться / затахариться; лечь на дно

MEANING: to conceal yourself or your intentions  
*After holding up the bank, the robbers lay low for a while.*

ORIGIN: The reference is to a hunter hiding down in the undergrowth waiting for his prey. In the *Uncle Remus* stories of Joel Chandler Harris, Br'er Rabbit frequently lay low.

### **lies, damned lies and statistics**

есть ложь, наглая ложь и статистика

MEANING: there are ordinary lies, very harmful lies and (most shameless of all) statistics which seem to show the truth, but can be exploited to show the opposite

*You shouldn't trust the results of public opinion polls — you know, there are lies, damned lies and statistics.*

ORIGIN: The words in full are: *There are three kinds of lie: lies, damned lies and statistics.* They are attributed to Benjamin Disraeli, a Prime Minister of Great Britain (1804–81).

### **life begins at forty**

в сорок лет жизнь только начинается

MEANING: even in middle age the future is promising  
*Why should you look so miserable? You have a good job, a great family and friends, and what's more, life begins at forty, doesn't it?*

ORIGIN: This was the title of a book in 1932 by an American professor of journalism, William B. Pitkin, who sought to encourage an adventurous optimistic approach in older people. It quickly became a catch phrase and inspired a song with the same title.

### **life of Riley**

сладкая / праздная жизнь (богатого человека)

MEANING: an easy, wealthy life with no effort  
*She married a rich old man and led the life of Riley.*

ORIGIN: Since the 19th century there have been songs and later television characters to support the idea that a person called Riley once lived a rich and carefree existence, but no historical figure has been found. Probably Riley was supposed to be the archetypal Irishman and prejudiced English people characterized him as a cheerful sponger.

### **lion's share**

львиная доля

MEANING: the biggest portion  
*The lion's share of the museum's budget goes on special exhibitions.*

ORIGIN: One of Aesop's fables tells the story of how a lion hunted together with a heifer, a goat and a sheep, having agreed to share the catch. At the end of the day the lion chose the best part for himself, then took a second portion on the grounds that belonged to the strongest animal, then a third was for him as the biggest. Seizing the remaining part he simply said: *Touch it if you dare.*

### **little bird told me**

сорока на хвосте принесла

MEANING: to have obtained information from a secret source

*So, who told you she'd got the job? — Oh, let's just say, a little bird told me so.*

ORIGIN: The idea of birds as messengers is ancient and widespread. This saying is included in John Heywood's 1546 collection. Nowadays it has a rather coy flavor and is used by adults to children.

### **little pitchers have big ears**

у детишек ушки на макушке

MEANING: be careful what you say in front of little children because they understand more than you think

*Don't use any swear words around Brian — little pitchers have big ears.*

ORIGIN: This warning comparing children's ears to the handles of a jug appears in John Heywood's 16th century proverb collection as *small pitchers have wide eares.*

### **live / lead / bear / have a charmed life**

как заговорённый; чудом избежать (беды, опасности, гибели); Бог бережёт

MEANING: to be lucky, to come through dangers unharmed, to have an unusual ability to come out unscathed from trouble or danger

*After her miraculous escape from the fire we've decided she leads a charmed life.*

ORIGIN: In Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Macbeth is confident of success against Macduff because he bears a charmed life, which must not yield to one of woman born, but the magic does not work because Macduff turns out to have been born by Caesarean section and therefore not born of a woman in the usual way. In *Macbeth* (Act V, Sc. 3), Macbeth defies Macduff to harm him: *I bear a charmed life*, using *charmed* in the sense of *magical*.

### **lock, stock and barrel**

СО ВСЕМИ ПОЖИТКАМИ / МАНАТКАМИ / ПОТРОХАМИ

MEANING: the whole of something; all the parts of a thing; everything

*He sold everything — lock, stock and barrel — and moved to California.*

ORIGIN: This saying originally referred to just the three main parts of a gun: the lock (the firing mechanism), the stock (the handle), and the barrel (the tube the bullet is fired through). By the early 19th century the expression came to mean all of anything or the whole works. The origin might also be in the old general store, which had a lock on the door to the stock, or goods, and a barrel on which business took place.

### **long time no see**

СКОЛЬКО ЛЕТ, СКОЛЬКО ЗИМ; СТО ЛЕТ НЕ ВИДЕЛИСЬ

MEANING: it's nice to see you again after such a long time  
*Hello, Charles! Long time no see. Fancy a drink?*

ORIGIN: This now jocular greeting originates in Pidgin English, a mixture of English and features of native languages which was used in parts of the former British Empire especially for trading. A translation of the Chinese *hao jiu bu jian*.

## **look daggers**

смотреть волком; испепелять взглядом

MEANING: to stare with hatred and hostility

*I suddenly noticed David looking daggers at me and thought I'd better shut up.*

ORIGIN: This is at least four centuries old, sometimes taking the form *to speak daggers* as in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Hamlet says of his mother, *I will speak daggers to her*.

# M

## **make a beeline for something**

прямым ходом / напрямиком направиться

MEANING: to go directly to something

*When our bus got to the hotel, some of the travelers made a beeline for the bar.*

ORIGIN: Bees spend the day flying from flower to flower to collect pollen. However, in the evening they return to their hives as quickly as possible and therefore fly in a straight line. They *make a beeline for home*.

## **make a mountain out of a molehill**

делать из мухи слона

MEANING: to make a small problem seem very important; exaggerate a minor difficulty

*Come on, don't make a mountain out of a molehill. It's not that important.*

ORIGIN: A mole is a small wild animal which lives under the ground and digs tunnels through the soil. It leaves small heaps of soil on the surface of the ground and these are known as *molehills*.

## **make a silk purse out of a sow's ear**

сделать из дерьма конфетку

MEANING: to create something valuable or beautiful out of something practically worthless or ugly

*Owen thinks that by polishing his old car, he can make a silk purse out of a sow's ear.*

ORIGIN: There are similar expressions in many languages; these sayings also use *good thing-bad thing*

combinations. An English version of this idiom has been around since 1700. A silk purse is an elegant, expensive item made of fine, shiny fibers. A sow is an adult female pig. So if anyone can take a sow's ear and turn it into a silk purse, he or she might be able to take a bad situation and make something good out of it.

### **make heads or tails out of something**

разобраться в ч-л, понять

MEANING: to understand how something works; to figure something out

*Dad couldn't make heads or tails out of the instructions for assembling his new weather-forecasting machine.*

ORIGIN: Cicero, a Roman statesman and public speaker of the first century BC, used a similar expression, *neither head nor feet*. The current English saying comes from the 1600s. The head is the front or top of something. The tail is the end or bottom. So if you can make heads or tails out of something, you can understand it from beginning to end, from top to bottom. This expression is usually used in the negative (*They can't make...*) because there are a lot of things in this world that are difficult to understand.

### **make no bones about something**

не делать секрета; говорить прямо / в лоб, без утайки, не выбирая выражений

MEANING: to speak directly, plainly, honestly, and without hesitation or doubt

*He made no bones about his dissatisfaction with the service in the hotel.*

ORIGIN: The origin of this old idiom, first used in print in 1548, is not clear. Some word experts have suggested that it came from the fact that if there are no bones in your soup, you can just swallow it without

worrying about choking. That's like speaking plainly without worrying.

### **make one's mouth water**

СЛЮНКИ ТЕКУТ

MEANING: to look so attractive and desirable that it makes you want to have it very much; to want to eat or drink something that looks or smells delicious

*Seeing those posters of Hawaii made my mouth water for a vacation on a beach.*

ORIGIN: This expression was used as early as the mid-1500s, but since time began, people have known that the sight, smell, or even thought of food can make a person salivary glands start up, causing the mouth to water. Though this saying is often used in connection with food or drink, it can really be used when looking forward to something that you want a lot.

### **media hype**

медийный / рекламный пузырь

MEANING: publicity in the newspapers or on TV which makes a person or thing much more talented, attractive or valuable than they are in reality

*We are certainly seeing a lot of hype by some companies.*

ORIGIN: The slang word *hype* may either be a short form of *hyperbole* or of *hypodermic*, the thinking behind the latter being something is given an unnatural boost, such as an injected drug may give a person.

### **mind over matter**

СИЛА ВОЛИ

MEANING: the power of your mind is stronger than the body  
*Giving up smoking is just a question of mind over matter.*

ORIGIN: Virgil, a Roman poet who was born in 70 BC, used this expression in his famous poem, *The Aeneid*. *Mind* means brain, thoughts, and willpower. *Matter* means a physical object, and it can also mean trouble or difficulty. Notice also that *mind* and *matter* both begin with *m*, and alliteration helps make a saying more popular.

### **mind your Ps and Qs**

соблюдать церемонии

MEANING: to be careful what you say and do; be well behaved and polite

*You'll have to mind your Ps and Qs when you meet your girlfriend's mother for the first time.*

ORIGIN: This expression has two possible origins. It most probably arose through teaching children how to write and spell. The teacher might warn the children of the possible confusion between the letters *p* and *q* if they are not written very carefully.

The second theory is that the phrase could relate to the old custom of recording the number of beers a customer had to drink. *P* stands for pint and *Q* for quart. A quart is two pints. English pubs do not use this measure now. Customers had the number and size of their drinks recorded by the barman using either a *P* or a *Q*. Before the customer left the pub, he would be asked *to mind his Ps and Qs* or in other words, to pay his bill.

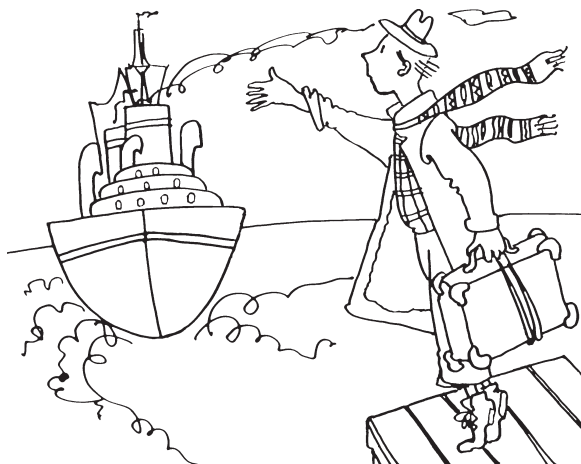
### **miss the boat**

проворонить, прозевать; поезд ушёл

MEANING: to lose an opportunity; to arrive too late and miss out on something

*If you're late to the interview, you'll miss the boat for the job.*

ORIGIN: This expression has been used by many people since about 1900s, when there were no airplanes and



many people traveled to far-off places by boat. If you arrived at the dock after the boat had sailed because you lost track of time, overslept, or were delayed, then you missed out.

### **money for old rope**

лёгкие деньги

MEANING: money for doing very little

*Selling hamburgers from a prime position on the beach is money for old rope.*

ORIGIN: In the Middle Ages hanging was a common death penalty. The hangman was the one who placed the noose around the neck of the condemned person and carried out the execution. He was paid for the job but could make extra money afterwards by cutting the rope into small pieces and selling them to the spectators. People used to think that the rope would bring them luck.

### **monkey business**

тёмные делишки; дурацкие штучки

MEANING: silliness or fooling around; dishonest or illegal activities; idiotic pranks

*He seems to be involved in some monkey business or other.*

ORIGIN: This expression has two meanings. One concerns comical behavior like that of a playful monkey. The other refers to sneaky, unlawful actions. So a student could be sent to the principal's office for monkey business, and a politician can be sent to jail for monkey business. This idiom, from 20th-century America, is like many other expressions that relate human behavior to animal behavior (*sly as a fox; wise as an owl*; and so on).

### **moonlight**

халтурить; подрабатывать на стороне

MEANING: to do another job as well as one's normal one  
*I don't earn enough money as a nurse so I moonlight as a waitress in the evenings.*

ORIGIN: This word describes the doing of a second job which is normally secret in some way – perhaps from the first employer or from the taxman.

### **morning after**

после вчерашнего (похмелье)

MEANING: the morning after a party, when you feel ill because you were drunk; a hangover  
*Frank's got a bad case of the morning after.*

ORIGIN: The full phrase began in the 19th century as the *morning after the night before*. It has been extended to any unpleasant after-effect of over-indulgence.

### **mum's the word**

рот на замок; молчу как рыба

MEANING: don't say anything to anyone  
*I don't want her to know about the present till Christmas Day! – OK! Mum's the word!*

ORIGIN: *Mum* comes from the sound made when one's lips are closed.

## **mumbo-jumbo**

заумь; китайская грамота

MEANING: language, ideas, beliefs which are either too complicated and difficult to understand or nonsensical

*He talked a lot of mumbo-jumbo about space and time and I didn't understand a word!*

ORIGIN: When British merchants visited West Africa in the 18th century, they discovered tribes who worshipped a god called *Mama Dyumbo*. Because they didn't believe in the god themselves, the merchants thought that the Africans' religion was silly and meaningless. They called it *mumbo-jumbo* (their pronunciation of *Mama Dyumbo*) and the expression became part of the English language.

## **Murphy's / Sod's / Spode's Law**

закон подлости

MEANING: if anything can go wrong, it will

*While we were inflating the hot-air balloon for the journey, we became victims of Murphy's Law; a gust of wind blew it into the sea.*

ORIGIN: This saying dates back to the 1940s. A dictionary suggests that it was named after a character who always made mistakes, in a series of educational cartoons published by the US Navy.

# N

## **necessity is the mother of invention**

нужда заставит; голь на выдумки хитра

MEANING: inventiveness or creativity stimulated by need or difficulty

*He created shoes with stilts so he could reach the ceiling. Necessity is the mother of invention.*

ORIGIN: A phrase similar to this was used by people in ancient Greece, and today it is a proverb in Italian, French, German, and some other languages. The first use of it in English was in a British play in 1672. It's very popular all over the world, probably because it states a universal truth. If you urgently need something that you don't have, you will discover or invent it by using your imagination and skill. In this expression, *mother* means the creative source that gives birth to the invention.

## **neither fish, (flesh) nor fowl**

ни рыба ни мясо; ни то ни сё

MEANING: belonging to no definite category; of no use to anyone

*They felt he was neither fish nor fowl – not qualified to lead the department, yet not appropriate to work as a staff member either.*

ORIGIN: The original saying (1546) referred to the classification of foods as eaten by different groups. Fish was food for monks, meat for the people and fowl for the poor.

### **never say die**

не вешать нос; не унывать

MEANING: do not give up

*This stage set doesn't look too promising, but never say die, it may still work.*

ORIGIN: Charles Dickens used this expression in *Pickwick Papers*.

### **night of long knives**

ночь длинных ножей

MEANING: a surprise purge of unwanted members of a government or anybody in authority

*If the proposed takeover of the Rover Group by British Aerospace turned into effect, there would inevitably be the night of long knives.*

ORIGIN: The name was given to the time in 1934 when Hitler liquidated the leaders of SS storm-troopers who had helped him to power. Since then it has been used, for example, to describe ruthless reorganizations of the cabinets of Harold Macmillan and Margaret Thatcher.

### **nine days' wonder**

однодневка (об успехе, новости)

MEANING: something that has short-lived appeal and is soon forgotten

*This film star is a nine days' wonder.*

ORIGIN: The idiom alludes to the fact that dogs (like cats) are born blind. After nine days, in other words, their eyes are open to see clearly.

### **no ifs and buts**

и никаких возражений / пререканий; никаких «но» / «если»

MEANING: no excuses, hesitations, delaying tactics

*No ifs and buts, just do the work and tell me when it's finished.*

ORIGIN: The meaning has changed since the 16th century, when it meant wishful thinking. It tends to be used

now in the context of a warning to someone, especially a child, to do as they are told without any *ifs and buts*.

### **no pain, no gain**

без труда не вытащишь и рыбку из пруда

MEANING: you cannot obtain the reward without suffering the process of getting it

*We tried to make television programs that were new and different, and we weren't always successful, but no pain, no gain.*

ORIGIN: the expression is twentieth-century American and derives from proverbial expression such as, *Nothing ventured, nothing gained*. Its appeal comes from the simple rhyme.

### **no rest for the wicked**

«ни сна, ни отдыха измученной душе»

MEANING: you cannot relax

*I can't talk — I've got to finish this essay. There's no rest for the wicked.*

ORIGIN: Literally this phrase means that sinners must endure eternal torment in Hell after death, but is now used humorously to imply that you are so busy you must have been wicked to deserve such hardship. The Russian equivalent comes from A. Borodin's opera "Prince Igor."

### **no room / not enough room to swing a cat**

негде повернуться; мало места

MEANING: to be / have very little physical room to move about; a very small place

*There is not enough room to swing a cat in our flat, so I don't think a party is a good idea.*

ORIGIN: There are various suggested origins of the phrase. Swinging cats by their tails as a mark for sportsmen was once a popular amusement. Also, *the cat o' nine tails* was the notorious whip used to keep



discipline in the navy in the past. In the limited room on a ship space had to be found to operate the cat effectively.

### **no spring chicken**

не первой молодости / свежести

MEANING: not young anymore

*He must be ten years older than Grace and she's no spring chicken.*

ORIGIN: This saying has been around since the early 1800s, and it almost always applied to women, although there is no reason it couldn't refer to men, too. A spring chicken is a really young chick, like a baby. The expression began as *now past a chicken*, and the saying today is a variation of the original.

### **nosey got shot**

не суй свой нос (в чужой вопрос)

MEANING: don't interfere in affairs that do not concern you or you will suffer harm yourself; often said touching the nose with one's forefinger

*What were you saying about me to June? — Mind your own business! Nosey got shot!*

ORIGIN: *Nosey* comes from *nosey parker*, a person who pries into other people's affairs; *Parker* as a surname seems to have been freely chosen.

### **not somebody's cup of tea**

не в ч-л вкусе / духе

MEANING: not what one likes or prefers; not suitable; not to one's taste

*Please show me another hat. This one's not my cup of tea.*

ORIGIN: In Britain, tea has been an extremely popular drink since the mid-1700s. In the late 1800s, people in England started saying that something they liked was their *cup of tea*. Later, probably in the 1920s, the expression took on its present negative meaning.

### **nothing to sneeze at**

не баран / не кот начихал

MEANING: not small or unimportant; something to be taken seriously

*He won the silver medal, not the gold, but that's still nothing to sneeze at.*

ORIGIN: In the early 1800s people were already using this saying. Perhaps it comes from the idea of turning your nose up at something or someone to express scorn or contempt. Since sneezes come from your nose, something that's *not to be sneezed at* should be treated as important and worthy.

### **nothing to write home about**

ничего особенного / стоящего / из ряда вон выходящего

MEANING: boring or disappointing; not very exciting, important  
*The concert was nothing to write home about.*

ORIGIN: This is an ancient concept expressed by Pliny the Younger two thousand years ago in one of his letters.

# O

## **off the cuff**

экспромтом; спонтанно; без подготовки; с ходу

MEANING: impromptu

*I had no time to prepare a speech, so I said a few words off the cuff.*

ORIGIN: This is from the habit of speakers scribbling brief notes on their starched cuffs in the days when such garments were common.

## **old banger**

развалюха, колымага, драндулет

MEANING: an old, dirty car which is almost worn-out

*I have to visit my mother every month. She lives in the country and it takes hours to travel there by train. — Why don't you buy yourself an old banger — it wouldn't cost very much.*

ORIGIN: The expression derives from the fact that an old car often backfires and makes loud *bangs*. It must always be used in its full form because *a banger* without *old* is a slang word meaning *sausage*!

## **on cloud nine**

на седьмом небе; на верху блаженства; вне себя (от радости)

MEANING: in a state of high excitement and happiness; be very happy, elated

*She has been on cloud nine ever since she was offered the job in Rotterdam.*

ORIGIN: This expression originates from the US weather bureau which identifies different types of cloud.

The highest type, which is found at 10, 000 meters, is called *cloud nine*. The association with happiness is through a play on words because *high* can also mean euphoric or elated.

### **on his / its last legs**

на последнем издыхании

- MEANING: near to death or to the end of his or its useful life  
*My washing machine is on its last legs – I've had it twenty-five years.*
- ORIGIN: The expression was used in the sixteenth century and probably refers to the buckling of an animal's back legs when it is weak.

### **on the fritz**

сломался, не работает

- MEANING: broken; out of order; not working  
*We can't watch the game at my house because my TV is on the fritz.*
- ORIGIN: Though this expression is a recent one (the early 1900s), nobody today is quite sure how it got started. One word expert gave the following possible explanation. During World War I, a degrading term for a German soldier was *Fritz*, a common German name (short for Friedrich). Something not working or ruined could be compared to the defeated Germans.

### **on the Q.T. (QT / q.t.)**

под шумок; тайком; украдкой; втихаря

- MEANING: quietly; secretly; without anyone knowing  
*She doesn't know about the surprise party, so keep it on the Q.T.*
- ORIGIN: Sometimes we abbreviate words by using their first and last letters. In 1870 there was a popular ballad called "The Talkative Man from Poplar." In one of the lines the word *quiet* was shortened to *q.t.* Some people think this abbreviation could have been used

in earlier writings, but after 1870 *on the q.t.* became a common phrase for *keep it quiet*.

### **one for the road**

посошок на дорожку; рюмка на прощание

MEANING: one last drink, usually alcoholic, before leaving a pub, house, etc.

*It's a pity you have to leave the party so soon. If you're not in a hurry how about one for the road?*

ORIGIN: In London during the Middle Ages, prisoners who were condemned to death would be taken from the Old Bailey prison (now Law Courts) to Tyburn (now Marble Arch). The journey was along the straight road from the City to the West End in a wagon pulled by a horse. Before leaving, it was traditional for the prisoners to visit the pub opposite the Old Bailey. In the pub, *the Magpie and Stump*, they could have a large glass of beer or *one for the road*. The prisoners would arrive at Tyburn drunk and therefore would not worry about the execution to come.

### **one sandwich short of a picnic**

не все дома; крыша поехала

MEANING: stupid or crazy

*After talking to him for about 10 minutes I decided he was definitely one sandwich short of a picnic.*

ORIGIN: The late twentieth century has seen a vogue for this way of indicating mental impairment.

### **one-horse town**

захолустье; дыра

MEANING: a place with few comforts and activities; a dull rural town

*They got fed up with the noisy, crowded city, so they moved to a one-horse town out West.*

ORIGIN: This expression was first used in the 1850s when there were more horses than people in some

American towns. If a town had only one horse, it must have been really small, with very little happening. This exaggerated saying became popular even though it is insulting. Now it can describe any business or project that's considered rather minor or dull.

**out of the mouths of babes (and sucklings)**

уста́ми младе́нца (глаголет истина)

MEANING: children sometimes show surprising wisdom and insight

*The four-year-old said, "Aunt Roslyn, your dress is as pretty as a garden." Out of the mouths of babes, you know.*

ORIGIN: This concept occurs in several parts of the Bible, for example in Psalm 8: *Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast ordained strength.*

# P

## **paint the town red**

уйти / удариться в загул

MEANING: to go out and enjoy oneself in a noisy and expensive manner; have a wild and boisterous time

*He inherited a lot of money and proceeded to paint the town red with it.*

ORIGIN: In a 1970s Clint Eastwood western *High Plains Drifter*, a small town is literally painted red and renamed Hell. The phrase is of American origin of the 19th century.

## **parting shot**

язвительная фраза (брошенная на прощание)

MEANING: a last attack or scolding remark when leaving a dispute, giving the adversary no opportunity to respond

*His parting shot was, "I'm going to spend the evening with people who appreciate my company."*

ORIGIN: The original form of this phrase, *Parthian shot*, comes from the horsemen of Parthia who were famous for attacking by throwing spears and arrows over their shoulders while retreating.

## **pass the buck**

валить с больной головы на здоровую; увиливать от ответственности

MEANING: to evade responsibility by shifting the onus on to someone else

*Parents often try to pass the buck to teachers when children misbehave in school.*

ORIGIN: The expression comes from the game of poker as played in the nineteenth century when a piece of buckshot would be passed round to remind players who was next to deal.

### **pass the hat**

просить / кланчить подаяние / милостыню; пустить шапку по кругу

MEANING: to ask for contributions; to beg  
*I need money for the amusement park. I may just have to pass the hat.*

ORIGIN: At one time, hats were passed around at entertainment events by people asking for money. The custom might have originated with street minstrels who entertained people and then requested payment. And a hat is an excellent container in which to collect money. A related expression is *hat in hand*.

### **pay the piper**

диктовать условия; музыку заказывать

MEANING: to provide the money for something, and thus have some control over it  
*He feels his fiancée's parents should be allowed to organize the wedding as they want it – after all, they are paying the piper.*

ORIGIN: Pipers and other musicians played in taverns, giving rise to the nineteenth-century saying *He who pays the piper calls the tune* (кто платит, тот и музыку заказывает).

### **pay through the nose**

платить втридорога

MEANING: to pay a high price for something which is not worth it; to be overcharged  
*If you want a really good car you have to pay through the nose for it.*

ORIGIN: This expression relates to a poll tax imposed by Danish authorities on the Irish people during the ninth century. The punishment for not paying the tax was to have your nose slit open with a knife as an example to others.

### pie in the sky

журавль в небе

MEANING: something not possible; an unrealistic hope  
*He says he will get a well-paid job but I think it's just a pie in the sky.*



ORIGIN: In 1906 an American union organizer wrote a song called “The Preacher and the Slave” that had the words: *Work and pray, Live on the hay, You’ll get a pie in the sky when you die! (That’s a lie.)*

*Pie* meant decent working conditions and good wages. Union workers wanted those things while they were alive, not after they died. The song was popular, and the phrase *pie in the sky* came to mean promised pleasures that probably won’t come true, or rewards that are given after you die.

### **piece of cake**

пара пустяков; плёвое дело; раз плюнуть

MEANING: an especially easy and pleasant task; something achieved with very little effort

*Don't worry. Skateboarding down this hill is a piece of cake.*

ORIGIN: In the nineteenth century, Southern American black people held a traditional contest for the best-dressed couple. The contestants simply had to walk slowly round the prize cake until it was cut and awarded to those judged to be winners. According to another interpretation, this phrase could have come from an Afro-American dance contest. The dance was called the *cakewalk*, and the winner won a cake.

### **play gooseberry**

третий лишний

MEANING: to be a third unwanted person accompanying two lovers

*I'm certainly not coming with you and your fiancée – I hate playing gooseberry.*

ORIGIN: The origin is obscure, but guesses include the possibility that it is connected with the fact that Gooseberry was an old name for the Devil.

### **play it by ear**

решать по ходу дела / по ситуации (не обдумывая заранее)

MEANING: to adapt to something by improvising or responding instinctively to the demands of the situation

*I don't know how he is going to react at the meeting, so we had better just play it by ear.*

ORIGIN: The term originally only referred to playing music, implying that a musician might play without reading the music, but by listening to it or simply playing along. It has since been expanded to other contexts.

### **play possum**

притворяться (больным или мёртвым); прикидываться (несведущим или непонимающим); прятаться

MEANING: to pretend to be unavailable, ignorant of a fact or uninterested in order to protect oneself

*He may be away – he doesn't answer the telephone – but he might just be playing possum.*

ORIGIN: The term comes from the opossum which when confronted pretends to be unconscious or plays dead.

### **play second fiddle**

играть вторую скрипку; быть на вторых ролях

MEANING: to be a follower; to be in an inferior position

*Why should Jesse play second fiddle to him? She's as smart as he is.*

ORIGIN: In an orchestra, there are the roles of first violin (or fiddle) and second fiddle. The person who plays *first violin* is supposed to be the most important musician in an orchestra. So, since at least the middle 1700s, when this saying was first used, *playing second fiddle* has meant to act the smaller part or to be in a lower position rather than to be the leader.

### **play the field**

заводить / крутить романы

MEANING: to have many sweethearts or dates without going steady or committing yourself to one person

*I don't plan to date just one man. I'm going to play the field.*

ORIGIN: During the 19th century, gamblers who wanted to increase their chances of winning money at a horse race bet on every horse except the favorite. This was called *playing the field (of horses)*. Later the phrase was extended to other areas of life, especially dating.

### **play to the gallery**

работать / играть на публику

MEANING: to do or say something with an eye to maximum popularity or effect rather than genuine conviction  
*Politicians these days are more interested in playing to the gallery than exercising real influence on world events.*

ORIGIN: Traditionally the gallery in a theatre has offered the cheapest seats and, by implication, contains the least intelligent spectators, so that words directed at them will be appealing to the lowest instincts.

### **poker face**

каменное / непроницаемое / невозмутимое лицо

MEANING: a blank facial expression which hides what the person may be thinking  
*Whenever Betty attended one of her children's performances, she managed to keep a poker face.*

ORIGIN: In the card game *poker* the players bet for money, so if a player has a good hand he will naturally be happy. However, if his face betrays this he is open to sabotage by the other players. Similarly, if he has a poor hand but remains confident in expression he might fool his fellow players and affect their betting.

### **poles apart**

диаметрально противоположные; разительно отличаться

MEANING: very different from each other; as far apart as possible  
*They are poles apart in their attitude to education.*

ORIGIN: This is often said of two people who are very different. The idea is that they are as far removed from each other as the North Pole is from the South Pole.

### **post mortem**

разбор полётов

MEANING: analysis / examination of an event which has happened  
*When I lost the tennis match my coach wanted a post mortem.*

ORIGIN: This Latin phrase means *after death*. When a doctor examines a dead body to find out the cause of death he carries out a *post mortem* but the phrase is now commonly used in many other situations as well. Because of its original meaning however, it usually refers to events which are unpleasant.

### **practice what you preach**

слова не расходятся с делом

MEANING: do not do what you tell others not to do; set a good example to people to whom you give advice  
*He says he's a supporter of comprehensive education, but he doesn't practice what he preaches — his son is at boarding school.*

ORIGIN: This idiom expresses an ancient idea but appeared in this precise form only in 1678.

### **present company excepted**

о присутствующих не говорят

MEANING: not including the people who are here now; used as a polite comment by a speaker to tell his listeners that his critical words do not apply to them  
*Present company excepted, I don't think many people realize the full significance of this project.*

ORIGIN: The words belong to John O'Keefe, an Irish playwright (1747–1833). They first appeared in his *London Hermit* (1793).

### **pull out all the stops**

бросить все силы; жать на все педали

MEANING: to act with as much energy, determination or emotion as possible  
*He pulled out all the stops to make his story as pathetic as he could.*

ORIGIN: This saying comes from the second half of the 19th century and refers to the workings of big organs. Church organs had many pipes that an organist played by pulling out knobs called stops.

If you pulled out all the stops, you got the fullest, loudest, most ear-filling sound possible. That idea was carried over to other activities in life where one goes all out to succeed or enjoy an activity.

### **pull the wool over someone's eyes**

втирать очки; вешать лапшу на уши

MEANING: to fool, deceive or trick someone

*Lynn tried to pool the wool over her eyes by saying that Mrs. Jarvis's dog had eaten her homework.*

ORIGIN: In 19th-century Europe the wearing of wigs (in slang *wool*) was common. In British courts today, some lawyers and judges still wear them. If you pulled the wig over a person's eyes, they couldn't see what was happening and could easily be tricked. It was said if a clever lawyer fooled a judge, he was *pulling the wool* over the judge's eyes. Now, we use this expression to describe any act of cheating or trickery.

### **pull one's leg**

разыгрывать, дурачить; подшучивать над к-л

MEANING: to tease or fool someone; to jokingly try to lie to somebody

*Oh, don't get so annoyed at them for teasing you. They're just pulling your leg.*

ORIGIN: By the late 1800s people sometimes tripped other people by catching their legs with a cane or running a string across the sidewalk. Sometimes it was just for fun; at other times robbers did it to steal from the victim after he or she had fallen.

### **put a sock in it**

закрой рот; замолчи

MEANING: "Shut up!" "Shut your mouth!" addressed to a noisy person

*Can he not speak for himself? — He can. Put a sock in it, all of you.*

ORIGIN: The catch phrase dates from the days of the wind-up, “acoustic” gramophones where the sound emerged from a horn. With no electronic controls to raise or lower the volume, the only way to regulate the sound was to put in or take out an article of clothing, which deadened it.

### **put elbow grease**

приложить руки; немало потрудиться / попотеть

MEANING: make hard physical effort; do hard, energetic manual labor

*This house will need a lot of elbow grease before it's comfortable to live in.*

ORIGIN: This seventeenth-century expression is said to have originated when a lazy apprentice was given a strong hint to put his arms to work more vigorously by being sent to a shop to buy some elbow grease. Another interpretation suggests that in Britain in the late 1600s people were using the term *elbow grease* to jokingly refer to the sweat worked up by strong, fast-moving work with one's arms, such as rubbing, polishing, and scraping.

### **put the cart before the horse**

делать шиворот-навыворот

MEANING: to do things in backward or reverse order

*They had bought all their furniture before they had a house — that's really putting the cart before the horse.*

ORIGIN: This popular idiom was used in ancient Greece and Rome, has been used by great writers like Shakespeare, and appears in many languages.

# Q

## **QED**

что и требовалось доказать

MEANING: there is a fact that proves what you have just said is true; as demonstrated; the problem has been solved  
*People are getting taller all the time — apparently it's progress and has to do with quality of life. Cavemen were short QED.*

ORIGIN: QED stands for *quod erat demonstrandum* which means *which was to be demonstrated*. Euclid, Greek mathematician of the 3rd century BC, added this phrase after his theorems.

## **quack (doctor)**

доктор-самозванец; целитель; шарлатан

MEANING: a person who pretends to be a doctor and makes money by selling medicine, but who has no medical qualifications; used showing disapproval  
*The idea of curing baldness with preparations known as "hair restorer" has long been associated with quacks.*

ORIGIN: The term is applied jocularly to any doctor but was originally applied to medical charlatans who sold worthless remedies. The word *quack* suggests that the patter of the vendor was like the insistent noise of a duck. The term is thought to have come into English by the way of the Dutch word *kwakzalver* which describes a vendor of sham remedies.

## **quick and the dead**

живые и мёртвые

MEANING: the living and the deceased

*His decision was completely unexpected — it was enough to surprise both the quick and the dead.*

ORIGIN: *Quick* meant *alive* in Old English though the meaning is now obsolete except for this phrase.

### **quote, unquote / end quote**

цитирую; сказал буквально следующее

MEANING: a citation of someone's actual words

*And to think he chose to practice law because it's a quote, unquote "respected" profession!*

ORIGIN: The phrase is used to indicate precisely where another's reported words begin and end in your speech, especially when you do not think that phrase is true. Many speakers accompany this phrase with a gesture to signify inverted commas, usually by raising their hands to the level of each ear and curling their forefingers.

# R

## **rack one's brain(s)**

ЛОМАТЬ ГОЛОВУ

MEANING: think very hard to find a solution to a problem or to remember something

*I've been racking my brains all day to remember the name of the agency that Sheila recommended.*

ORIGIN: The rack was an instrument of torture upon which people's bodies were stretched. Its use was banned in 1640.

## **ragtag and bobtail**

шушера; всякий сброд; отбросы общества

MEANING: poor or common people; lowly people  
*The mercenary armies of feudal princes consisted of ragtag and bobtail of society.*

ORIGIN: This old expression has evolved out of two separate terms. *Rag and tag* was long used to mean inconsequential people and *bobtail* referred to the grooming of a horse's tail and was used to mean a contemptible person. Thus in effect the full phrase means something like the scum.

## **rain cats and dogs**

дождь льёт как из ведра

MEANING: to rain heavily  
*It was raining cats and dogs so I couldn't walk to the store.*

ORIGIN: Back in the 1500s houses had thatched roofs — thick straw — piled high, with no wood underneath. It was the only place for animals to get warm, so all the



dogs, cats and other small animals (mice, bugs) lived in the roof. When it rained, it became slippery and sometimes the animals would slip and fall off the roof – hence the saying *It's raining cats and dogs*. The most probable derivation of this phrase connects it with northern mythology and the symbolic significance of the cat as a signal of rains and storms.

### **rats abandon a sinking ship**

(бежать) как крысы с тонущего корабля

MEANING: selfish and cowardly people flee from a disastrous situation leaving others to face it

*Like rats abandoning a sinking ship, they switched to the other candidate when theirs began to lose.*

ORIGIN: This expression derives from an old superstition that if rats actually deserted a ship it was doomed to sink. It also plays on the image of the rat as a low, despicable creature in view of the old naval tradition that it is noble to go down with your ship.

### **real McCoy**

без подделки / без дураков (подлинный, настоящий)

MEANING: the genuine article; something of good quality, compared to others; not a fake or copy

*That is a fake antique. This one's the real McCoy.*

ORIGIN: There are two good possibilities of this idiom's origin. One is a boxer in the late 1800s who called himself Kid McCoy. (His real name was Norman Selby.) He was a great fighter and so popular that other boxers started calling themselves Kid McCoy. So Mr. Selby had to bill himself as *the real McCoy*. The other explanation refers to the real Mackay, a brand of whisky.

### **red herring**

отвлекающий манёвр

MEANING: something deliberately misleading to divert your attention from the main subject; something irrelevant that confuses an issue

*Talking about the new plant is a red herring to keep us from learning about downsizing plans.*

ORIGIN: A red herring is a fish that has been pickled in such a way that it turns reddish. It has a strong smell. Centuries ago it was used to teach hunting dogs to follow a trail. It was dragged on the ground and the dogs followed its scent. Later, people who hated hunting dragged a red herring across the path of the fox the dogs were chasing. The dogs would get confused, stop following the fox, and follow the smell of the herring. Sometimes escaping crooks also used red herring to cover up their own scents so the bloodhounds couldn't find them. This idiom has been popular since the 19th century.

### **red tape**

бюрократические препоны; бумажная волокита

MEANING: official, bureaucratic formalities and procedure which slow down people and processes; legal or official obstacles to doing something

*I hate applying for visas. For some countries there's so much red tape involved.*

ORIGIN: Lawyers and bureaucrats traditionally bound their papers together with red ties.

### **rhubarb, rhubarb**

что говорить, когда нечего говорить

MEANING: actors mumble this in crowd scenes to give the impression of speech, as a background noise, without actually producing coherent sentences. The idea is to repeat a word, which uttered by various voices, adds together to sound like the noise a crowd makes. Another phrase said to have been repeated by actors in this situation is "My fiddle, my fiddle, my fiddle," and there is a phrase used by Russian actors meaning literally, "I speak and I don't speak."

*My first part on the stage was saying "rhubarb, rhubarb" at the end of the play.*

ORIGIN: Presumably this custom dates from the twentieth century.

### **right as rain**

в прекрасной / отличной форме; как огурчик

MEANING: as healthy as one usually is; in one's best emotional and physical condition

*I'll be as right as rain as soon as I take my pills.*

ORIGIN: The suggestion as to why rain is regarded as right according to this expression includes the possibility that people simply like the alliteration; another possibility is that rain can be regarded as normal and sound as it is necessary to life.

### **rise and shine**

проснись и пой

MEANING: wake up and get up

*Rise and shine, sleepy head — you have to leave for school in twenty minutes.*

ORIGIN: This is an extremely common wake-up call that urges you to be bright and cheery rather than slothful and yawning. It most probably originated in military circles in America. The Russian equivalent was made popular by a Russian singer L. Mondrus.

### **rise from the ashes**

ВОССТАТЬ ИЗ ПЕПЛА

MEANING: to be renewed, repaired or rebuilt after a calamity  
*A few months after the earthquake, large sections of the city had risen from the ashes.*

ORIGIN: The phoenix was a legendary bird which was believed to set fire to itself and then resurrect itself from the ashes every five hundred years.

### **road rage**

дорожное безумие / бешенство

MEANING: a fit of uncharacteristic or unwarranted anger whilst driving a motor car  
*When I got the very last parking space, the man behind me jumped out of his car and screamed at me in a fit of road rage.*

ORIGIN: This term has caught on in the 1990s to the extent that it has been accepted as a behavioral phenomenon in some court cases.

### **run with the hare and hunt with the hounds**

и нашим и вашим; сидеть между двух стульев

MEANING: to play a double game, keeping in favor with two opposing sides at the same time  
*You've got to decide where you stand on this issue. You can't run with the hare and hunt with the hounds.*

ORIGIN: This hunting image has been in use since the fifteenth century.

## **Russian roulette**

русская / гусарская рулетка

- MEANING: extreme risk or danger, usually self-inflicted  
*I'm not willing to play Russian roulette with people's lives by drinking and driving.*
- ORIGIN: The game of Russian roulette supposedly came from a sport invented by soldiers in the Russian army during World War I and involved putting one bullet in a gun with six chambers, spinning the rotating chamber and then firing it at your head with a one in six chance of shooting yourself.

# S

## **salt of the earth**

СОЛЬ ЗЕМЛИ

MEANING: an expression used to describe people who are very kind or reliable, or have other very good features

*The newspaper described the youth group who helped in the local old people's home as the salt of the earth.*

ORIGIN: From the Bible (Matthew, 5:13).

## **say / cry uncle**

сдаваться; просить пощады

MEANING: to give up; to surrender; to concede defeat

*The schoolyard bully twisted Nick's arm until he said uncle.*

ORIGIN: This American expression probably started in the early 1900s, and by the middle of the last century it was quite popular. Nobody knows why crying *uncle* instead of *aunt* or *goldfish* or any other words means *surrendering*, but word experts think it may have come from either Ireland or ancient Rome. The old Irish word for the act of protecting is *anacol* (which sounds like *uncle*). So, if you cry or say *uncle*, you're crying for protection. An old Latin expression, *Patruē mi patruissime*, means "Uncle, my best of uncles." Maybe a Roman child shouted this when he got into trouble hoping his uncle would rescue him. But nobody really knows for sure.

### **school of hard knocks**

школа жизни; горький опыт

MEANING: experience, hardship, considered as an educative force

*He never went to high school; he was educated in the school of hard knocks.*

ORIGIN: The Oxford English Dictionary calls this “US Slang” and finds it in 1912. Receiving an honorary doctorate in the humanities from the University of Nevada in May 1976, Frank Sinatra said, “I am a graduate of the school of hard knocks.”

### **scrape (the bottom of) the barrel**

по сусекам поскрести

MEANING: to use whatever is left after the best has been taken; to be forced to use the remnants of something; to choose among the worst of something

*In the last days of the Third Reich, the German home guard was forced to scrape the barrel and recruit even children and old men.*

ORIGIN: Many things are stored in barrels, and the dregs sink to the bottom. So, if you need something urgently and most of it has already been taken, you have to scrape the bottom of the barrel to get whatever you can.

### **seamy side of life**

изнанка жизни

MEANING: the degenerate side

*As a social worker, you certainly see the seamy side of life.*

ORIGIN: The reverse side of a fine carpet or tapestry shows all the threads and seams, hence it is the seamy side.

### **see red**

взвиться / взбеситься от злости

MEANING: to give way to extreme anger

*When he laughed in my face, I just saw red.*

ORIGIN: This image probably comes from the color of blood which has always been associated with passion, but it may also be connected with the fury of the bull when provoked by the matador waving a red cloth although the movement, not the color is what excites the bull.

### **sell like hot cakes**

нарасхват; как горячие пирожки

MEANING: to be a commercial success; to sell quickly, effortlessly, and in quantity

*The footballs autographed by the state champion were selling like hotcakes.*

ORIGIN: The expression was known in the 16th century when hot bread and pancakes were particularly enticing to a population without quick ovens and good food-storage systems. Even today advertisements for hot, fresh bread attract many customers. By the middle of the 1800s the expression *selling like hotcakes* was transferred to any product that was being rapidly bought by the public.

### **sell-by date**

ехать с ярмарки; под горку; срок годности вышел

MEANING: the point at which something is no longer at its best and is beginning a natural decline

*Most footballers are past their sell-by date at thirty-five but Bobby is still a brilliant player.*

ORIGIN: This term was first used during the early 1970s to indicate when a food product should be sold. The *sell-by date* is printed on edible products in shops so that the consumer can check their freshness. Food which is past its *sell-by date* cannot legally be sold.

Today the expression is also used in a wider, and slightly humorous, way to describe anything which is past its best, or anyone — as in the example above.

### **set the Thames on fire**

изобрести / выдумать порох; хватать звёзды с неба

MEANING: to fail to make an impression (used usually in the negative)

*The teacher doubted if his son would ever set the Thames on fire.*

ORIGIN: Versions of this saying date back to the eighteenth century, and similar things have been said about the Rhine and Seine in the appropriate languages. The Romans had the expression, “Tiberium accendere nequaquam potest” (It isn’t at all possible to set the Tiber on fire).

### **shake a leg**

пошевеливаться; поторопиться

MEANING: to hurry up; to go faster; to speed up

*Shake a leg or you’re going to miss the bus.*

ORIGIN: This lively American expression from the late 1800s is an order to someone who is moving too slowly. When you remain still, your legs are motionless. So when somebody tells you to shake a leg, that’s a command to get going. This expression comes from the navy.

### **shoot from the hip**

рубить сплеча; говорить, не подумав

MEANING: to speak or act without first thinking about the consequences

*In the interview, Perry just shot from the hip and got himself into a lot of trouble.*

ORIGIN: In the olden days of the Western gunfighters, it was quicker to shoot your revolver from the side of your hip as soon as you pulled it from the holster than it was to raise it higher and shoot. If you had a good aim, this method was fast and accurate. Later the idea was transferred to talking or acting aggressively, recklessly and impulsively without thinking of the effect of your actions.

### **show must go on**

шоу продолжается

MEANING: things have to continue despite disaster; nothing can stop what has been planned

*The bride had planned the wedding outdoors, and even when it rained, she insisted that the show must go on.*

ORIGIN: The phrase comes from the performing arts and probably arose in the circus in the 19th century, where it was the responsibility of the band and the ringmaster to keep the audience entertained if anything went wrong during any of the dangerous acts.

In the 20th century this theatrical determination was transferred to anything in life that has to take place, no matter what.

### **show one's true colors**

показать своё истинное лицо

MEANING: to have one's true character revealed; to reveal what you are really like

*We thought Carl was a great guy until he showed his true colors by kicking his dog.*

ORIGIN: For centuries ships have flown colorful flags to identify themselves. Sometimes a ship could fool an enemy by flying a false flag that looked friendly. By flying a certain flag, a ship usually signals its national identity, but some ships involved in crime sail *under false colors* to conceal their activities.

### **sick as a parrot**

убитый горем; с разбитым сердцем

MEANING: suffering from a disappointment; heartbroken

*I'm sick as a parrot about having to cancel our holiday.*

ORIGIN: Among the suggested origins are that the phrase became popular after an outbreak of psittacosis in

1973 when humans as well as parrots were affected. In the 18th century the phrase *melancholy as a parrot* was current.

### **sight for sore eyes**

душа радуется (глядя на к-л / ч-л)

MEANING: a most welcome, unexpected sight; a pleasant surprise

*You're a sight for sore eyes — all dressed up in your new outfit.*

ORIGIN: In the 1700s an imaginative writer wrote that a welcome sight could figuratively cure sore eyes. Today, if you're in some kind of trouble, and into your view comes someone or something that can help, that's a *sight for sore eyes*.

### **sink or swim**

пан или пропал

MEANING: to fail or succeed by one's own efforts without anyone's help or interference

*I moved to a faraway city and had to sink or swim without my parents' help.*

ORIGIN: The phrase is extremely old. In the 14th century there was a cruel and bizarre old-time practice of throwing a person suspected of being a witch into deep water. The accused were usually women. If the woman sank (and drowned), she was innocent. If she floated, then the devil must have helped her and she was guilty. Geoffrey Chaucer, an English poet, used the phrase *float or sink* in his writings in the 1300s.

### **sitting duck**

лёгкая добыча; удобная мишень (для критики)

MEANING: an easy target; someone or something likely to be attacked and unable to put up a defense

*Don't stay by yourself in the schoolyard after school. You'll be a sitting duck for all the bullies.*

ORIGIN: A duck hunter knows that if a duck is sitting still, it's a much easier target than a duck in flight. By the first half of the 20th century the expression was used figuratively, transferred to any person who was an easy mark for someone who wanted to cheat or do them any harm.

### **sitting pretty**

хорошо / ловко устроился

MEANING: taking advantage of a favorable situation; to be in a lucky, superior, or advantageous position; be in a good situation, usually because you have a lot of money

*They bought their house when prices were much lower so they're sitting pretty.*

ORIGIN: This American colloquialism comes from the early 1900s. To the person who made up this phrase, *sitting pretty* must have suggested an easy, favorable position. The phrase is often used cynically by people in a less fortunate situation. It was the name of a musical in the 1920s.

### **six of one and half a dozen of the other**

что в лоб, что по лбу; без разницы

MEANING: the same, two identical things described differently; nothing to choose between

*I don't care if we eat Italian or Chinese food. To me, it's six of one and a half dozen of the other.*

ORIGIN: Charles Dickens, an English novelist, used this phrase in one of his books in 1852, but it has been known since 1800s. Six equals a half dozen, no matter which way you say it. So we can use this expression to refer to two things that offer no real choice because there isn't real difference between them.

### **sixth sense**

шестое чувство; интуиция

MEANING: a mysterious ability to predict things or be aware of things that others cannot detect

*He couldn't hear or see anyone, but a sixth sense told him that he was being followed.*

ORIGIN: The normal five senses are sight, taste, smell, touch and hearing.

### **slapdash**

халтурный; тяп-ляп

MEANING: inefficient; of a low standard

*It looks like a really slapdash job to me — I think you should ask for your money back!*

ORIGIN: This word is based on the phrase *a slap and a dash*. The verbs *slap* and *dash* both indicate hurry and communicate the idea of not being careful.

### **smart Alec**

профессор кислых щей; всезнайка; умник

MEANING: a show-off or know-all

*New teachers often have a hard time coping with the smart alecks in their classes.*

ORIGIN: The phrase originated in America in the 1860s but the identity of the original Alec has become obscure.

### **soft-soap**

подмазываться, подлизываться

MEANING: to try to persuade by flattery or gentle urging

*Alison thought that if she soft-soaped the teacher, he'd cancel the test.*

ORIGIN: This phrase comes from the first half of the 1800s when an imaginative writer saw a figurative similarity between slithery, slippery soft soap and insincere flattery and coaxing. Trying to get people to do what you want by sweet-talking them is like

coating them with soft, smooth soap. A related expression is *to butter someone up*.

**someone's bark is worse than his bite**

собака лает, ветер носит

MEANING: a person is not as fierce or disagreeable as his or her manner suggests; the threat is often worse than the action taken

*The new director yells a lot, but her bark is worse than her bite.*

ORIGIN: This proverbial expression was used as far back as the mid-1600s.

**spare the rod and spoil the child**

пожалеешь розгу, испортишь ребёнка

MEANING: to physically punish children when they misbehave so they'll learn to behave properly in the future; to treat children too softly, to leave fault uncorrected

*I'm glad I wasn't brought up in the old days when "spare the rod and spoil the child" was acceptable.*

ORIGIN: This call for strict discipline appears in various wordings at least six different times in the Bible. It made its way into English in about the year 1000. Corporal punishment (hitting or whipping) with a stick, cane, or paddle used to be a popular way to rear a child. It was legal for schoolmasters to do it not too long ago.

**spare tire**

«булки», лишний жир на теле

MEANING: excess fat around waist

*Stanley didn't sunbathe during the whole holiday. He's a little overweight and he didn't want anyone to see his spare tire!*

ORIGIN: The expression describes the appearance of the layer of fat which develops – usually in middle age – around the waist. The origin of the word is



the spare tire which is kept in the boot of a car for emergencies. Obviously the shape and appearance of a rubber tire is similar to the roll of fat around the waist!

### **spend a penny**

опустить монетку (пойти в туалет)

MEANING: to go to the toilet

*The touring coach stopped in the wood to allow the passengers to spend a penny.*

ORIGIN: This is a British euphemism related to the small fee that is paid for using some public lavatories, actually one penny until the 1970s.

### **spill the beans**

выдать секрет / тайну; проболтаться

MEANING: to give away a secret to someone who is not supposed to know it

*It was then that she threatened to spill the beans about her affair with the president.*

ORIGIN: A popular theory about the origin of this idiom goes back to the ancient Greeks and their secret

societies. People voted you into these clubs by putting a white bean or a black bean into a jar (white = yes; black=no). The beans were supposed to be counted in secret, but if somebody accidentally (or purposefully) knocked over the jar and spilled the beans, the secret vote would be revealed. Another theory holds that this is an example of American slang from the early 1900s that combined two old words, *spill* (meaning *talk*) and *beans* (meaning *information*), into a new phrase. A related expression is *to let the cat out of the bag*.

### **spit and polish**

надраить / начистить до блеска

MEANING: smart appearance; perfect presentation; cleaning and rubbing

*All it needed was a bit of spit and polish and we got it looking as good as new.*

ORIGIN: This term derives from the military where superiors tell their men to clean and polish their boots and their shoes for inspection. Traditionally this was done with spittle and rubbing.

### **spitting image of someone**

точная копия; как две капли воды похож; вылитый

MEANING: a strong likeness of someone; a perfect resemblance  
*You must be David's father. He's the spitting image of you.*

ORIGIN: Originally the saying was *spit and image*. *Spit* was an old word that meant *likeness*, but the original word might have been *spirit*, shortened into *spit*. As the years went by, *spit and* was pronounced *spittin* and later became *spitting*.

### **split hairs**

мелочиться по пустякам (в споре, дискуссии)

MEANING: to argue about small, unimportant differences

*He's only interested in hair-splitting, not real discussion.*

ORIGIN: William Shakespeare used an expression similar to this in about 1600 in one of his plays, and *splitting hairs* has been widely used since the late 1600s. When the saying originated, it was thought to be impossible to split anything as fine as a hair.

### **start from scratch**

начать с нуля

MEANING: to go back to the beginning  
*I built every bit of my own house. I started from scratch and did everything with my own hands.*

ORIGIN: The scratch is the starting line in races.

### **steal someone's thunder**

перебежать дорогу к-л

MEANING: to spoil the effect of someone's actions or words by doing the same or better first  
*He was looking forward to telling his family the news and was annoyed to find that his cousin had phoned them and stolen his thunder.*

ORIGIN: The expression was first used by an English playwright called John Dennis who lived at the beginning of the 18th century. For one of his plays he invented a way to create the noise of thunder. Although the play itself was a disaster and soon closed, everyone loved the thunder sound effect. It was used by others so much that Dennis said, "Damn them! They will not let my play run, but they steal my thunder."

### **steer clear of someone / something**

держаться подальше; обходить стороной

MEANING: to avoid  
*Bill is mad at me, so I've been steering clear of him.*

ORIGIN: The analogy in this phrase is to driving a car or boat and circling around something or someone to avoid

danger. The phrase has doubtless stuck not only due to its attractive rhyme but also its usefulness in expressing avoidance with a hint of fear and trepidation.

### **step on it**

дави на газ; дай газа до отказа; жми на всю катушку

MEANING: to go faster

*I got into the taxi quickly. "Euston Station, please, and step on it! My train goes in ten minutes!"*

ORIGIN: The phrase refers to pushing the accelerator on a car further down to make the car go faster.

### **stick and the carrot**

кнут и пряник

MEANING: a combination of bullying and gentle persuasion or bribery

*I've had to take the carrot-and-stick approach to disciplining my kids. The harder they work, the more money they make.*

ORIGIN: The phrase refers to the notorious difficulty of moving a stubborn donkey. The two methods that you might try are to hit it with a stick or to coax it with a carrot.

### **stick one's neck out**

высовываться; рисковать; лезть на рожон

MEANING: to do / say something which carries a high risk of failure, trouble or embarrassment

*The Prime Minister stuck his neck out today and promised that the unemployment figures would be halved by the end of this year.*

ORIGIN: In the Middle Ages prisoners who were given the death sentence were often beheaded. The condemned person had to kneel down and place his neck or stick his neck out on a block of wood. The executioner then chopped off his head with an axe. Today the risk of *sticking your neck out* is not

death but the result may still be unpleasant if you are wrong or fail.

### **stick-in-the mud**

косный / отсталый человек; ретроград; консерватор

MEANING: a person with old-fashioned ideas who avoids anything new, ignores progress, and fights change  
*She's a stick-in-the-mud who won't learn word-processing.*

ORIGIN: Although the idea behind this idiom goes back at least 500 years, the exact phrase *stick-in-the-mud* was first heard in the early 1700s. It probably came from the image of a wagon stuck in the mud. Soon people started describing a dull, overly careful person as *a stick-in-the-mud*.

### **stickler for detail**

дотошный человек; буквоед; педант

MEANING: a pedant; someone who is particular about small matters  
*Miss Clark, the new administrator, soon became known as a real stickler for detail.*

ORIGIN: This phrase can be used both as a criticism and a compliment depending on the context. *Stickler* is a now obsolete word for an umpire or referee in sporting games. The term was used at least as early as the 16th century.

### **straight from the horse's mouth**

из первых рук / уст

MEANING: directly from a person or place that is the most reliable source or the best authority  
*I got it straight from the horse's mouth that there's going to be a pop quiz today.*

ORIGIN: If you want to know the age of a horse, you should examine the size and shape of its teeth. Someone trying to sell you a horse may say it's young, but if you get your information *straight from the horse's*

*mouth*, you should know for sure. This expression is relatively modern, dating only from the 1920s.

### **straight from the shoulder**

говорить начистоту / без обиняков / открытым текстом;  
резать правду-матку

MEANING: frankly, honestly

*This is straight from the shoulder: I don't want to room with you because you smoke.*

ORIGIN: This is another well-known saying that comes from boxing. A prizefighter knows that a punch thrown straight from the shoulder is a full-force punch. It is quick, effective, and to the point. In the late 1800s this expression took on a wider meaning. If someone speaks to you in a sincere, honest way, even though it may upset you, he or she is speaking *straight from the shoulder*.

### **strike a happy medium**

найти золотую середину

MEANING: to find a compromise to a problem; to find a sensible solution midway between two opposite desires

*She wanted ice-cream, but her father wanted cake, so they struck a happy medium. They bought an ice-cream cake.*

ORIGIN: *To strike* often means to hit upon something. *The medium* is the position that is midway between two extremes. So when people want different things, and they hit upon a compromise solution halfway between their opposite wishes, they've found a medium point that makes them both happy.

### **sugar daddy**

«спонсор» / «папик»

MEANING: a man who gives money and presents to a woman younger than himself in return for her company and affection

*Betty Morgan got a mink coat from her sugar-daddy.*

ORIGIN: This is a term often used when a woman takes a much older (and especially wealthy) man. This term is of American origin.

### **swallow hook, line, and sinker**

клянуть на удочку; попасться на крючок (поверить)

MEANING: to believe a story completely without questioning it; to be very gullible

*I told him a ghost story, and he swallowed it hook, line, and sinker.*

ORIGIN: This American expression from the 1800s may be based on an older British saying from the 1500s, *to swallow a gudgeon*. A gudgeon is a small fish, like a minnow, that was often used as bait by fishermen. An unlucky fish usually swallows just the bait and the hook, but if it also swallows the fishing line and the lead sinker as well, it has gobbled up a lot. That's like a trusting person who accepts anything and everything he or she is told without thinking about whether or not it's true.

### **sweep under the rug**

замять / замалчивать / утаивать (не разглашать)

MEANING: to hide or ignore unpleasant matters

*Her parents found out about her failing grades, even though she tried to sweep them under the rug.*

ORIGIN: Imagine that your house is in a mess and you're not expecting company. Unexpectedly an important person rings your doorbell. Quickly you lift up the rug and sweep the mess under it before you open the door. Since the mid-1900s, *sweeping something under the rug* (or "carpet") has had a meaning that has nothing to do with brooms or floor coverings. It means hiding or not dealing with unpleasant issues.

## **sweet tooth**

сладкоежка

- MEANING: a great desire to eat sweet foods, especially those with lots of sugar, such as jams, candies, and pastries  
*With his sweet tooth, it will be nearly impossible for Jim to stay on a diet.*
- ORIGIN: Even in the 1500s, when this famous idiom was first used, people loved sweets. This yearning was called having a *sweet tooth*. Perhaps people thought that one tooth had a craving for salty foods, another for sour foods, and one for sweet foods. At first, *sweet tooth* referred to sweetmeats, wines, and pastries, but today it is used to describe only a craving for cakes, pies, and other sugary foods.

# T

## **take a rain check**

(как-нибудь) в другой раз

MEANING: you cannot accept somebody's invitation but you would like to do it another time; to cancel and defer to a later date

*I won't play tennis this afternoon but can I get a rain check?*

ORIGIN: The phrase originated in America where a *rain check* was a ticket for a baseball game given to people attending a game that was postponed due to bad weather, entitling them to see another game. It has since then taken on a broader meaning and is even used in countries where the term is not used with reference to sport.

## **take it with a grain / pinch of salt**

делить на десять; не принимать на веру

MEANING: to not believe completely; to be doubtful; to accept something only with strong reservations and not take great notice of it

*I took his story with a pinch of salt, because he has a tendency to exaggerate.*

ORIGIN: Some word experts think this expression first appeared in Latin by a Roman scholar Pliny in the first century BC. The report was of the discovery by Pompey of an antidote to poison: Take it with a grain of salt (*cum grano salis*).

Perhaps the saying refers to food that's not so tasty being swallowed more easily with a little salt. Another possibility is that a single grain or pinch

of salt isn't worth much, just like a story you don't think is completely true.

### **take someone down a peg or two**

поставить на место; осадить, одёрнуть; сбить спесь

MEANING: to lower someone's self-esteem; to deflate someone's boastfulness with a rebuff

*She thought she was very clever, but she was taken down a peg when she failed the exam.*

ORIGIN: The phrase refers to a ship's colors (flags bearing the vessel's allegiance) which were raised using pegs to show honor or glory. The higher the colors, the greater the glory.

### **talk blarney**

рассказывать сказки; плести небылицы

MEANING: persuasive, flattering, charming talk which is probably unreliable or untrue

*Her husband was talking a lot of blarney. He isn't a businessman at all. He's an unemployed postman. It seems he only married Mrs. Readies for her money!*

ORIGIN: The Blarney Stone is a rock set in the wall of Blarney Castle in Ireland. Tradition says that if you kiss the stone you will have the ability to charm and persuade people with your words. The tradition originates with McCarthy Mor who was the lord of the castle. In 1602 he was attacked by English forces who demanded his surrender. Instead of admitting defeat immediately, he kept giving the British excuses in order to delay his defeat. Because of his persuasive talking it took months before he surrendered.

### **talk turkey**

серьёзно обсудить проблему

MEANING: to talk seriously and frankly with someone; to discuss a problem in a serious way with a real

intention to solve it; to come to the essential point

*If the two sides in the dispute are to meet, they must be prepared to talk turkey.*



ORIGIN: This comes from the story of a Red Indian and a white man sharing the spoils after a day's hunting: three crows and two wild turkeys. The white man cunningly allotted himself two birds, the turkeys, and offered the Red Indian three birds, the crows. The resentful Indian advised the other to stop talking about the number of birds and to talk turkey instead.

### **tall, dark and handsome**

высокий, красивый (стереотип мужской красоты)

MEANING: the description of a romantic hero's attributes (likely to be found especially in women's fiction); the ideal man, perhaps not always so in reality but the common use of this phrase suggests that this description is a stereotyped fantasy

*An inch or so short of being really tall, dark and handsome, Dillman has the easy, relaxed ways of a man used to Hollywood-style good life.*

ORIGIN: This cliché seems to have surfaced in the early 1900. In the late 1920s it was used as a Hollywood term referring to Rudolph Valentino (though, in fact, he was not particularly tall).

### **tell it / that to the marines**

расскажи это своей бабушке; рассказывай сказки

MEANING: I don't believe what has been said  
*I've just been to tea at Buckingham Palace. — Tell that to the marines!*

ORIGIN: There are two possible origins of this phrase. It may have come from the fact that at one time marines were thought to be stupid by regular sailors, and therefore likely to believe something obviously foolish. The other explanation refers to King Charles I who is supposed to have originated this expression of incredulity when he was told of flying fish. So as not to offend the marines he later explained that he had referred to them as well-traveled men who would be likely to be able to confirm or deny the existence of such creatures.

### **there is more to it than meets the eye**

не так всё просто (как кажется на первый взгляд)

MEANING: there are hidden facts that can't be seen or understood right away; the matter is more complex and not as it seems to be on the surface  
*Sherlock Holmes realized immediately that there was more to the murder than met the eye.*

ORIGIN: This British cliché from the 1800s says that often things have deeper levels of meaning and importance than you can see at first. The full truth of a situation has to be thoroughly investigated.

### **there is something rotten in the state of Denmark**

прогнило что-то в Датском королевстве; что-то не так /  
не в порядке

MEANING: used ironically to indicate that something is suspicious, perhaps with reference to a government or organization.

*Father knew I was tricking him. He said, "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark."*

ORIGIN: In Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (Act I, Sc. 4, 1601) the young prince uses these words when he suspects his uncle of murdering his father.

### **thick as thieves**

не разлей водой

MEANING: intimate; in close confidence; very friendly; sharing the same (often profitable) interests

*Les and Larry have been as thick as thieves for years. They both have a large share in the industrial redevelopment project.*

ORIGIN: This old phrase alludes to the close plans and secrets that crooks might share. It has persisted for the appeal of both the image and alliteration.

### **third degree**

допрос с пристрастием

MEANING: a thorough interrogation; an intense questioning, usually by the police

*I got the third degree from my dad when I got in last night.*

ORIGIN: The Freemasons have a thorough examination of a member's qualifications if he seeks to become Master Mason, which means that he advances to the third degree. This is the most likely source of the term.

### **this is the life**

ВОТ ЭТО ДА; ВОТ ЭТО ЖИЗНЬ

MEANING: an expression of contentment with one's present state

*A sandy beach, plenty of hot sun, lots of nice people!  
This is the life!*

ORIGIN: The phrase dates from the early 1900s and became more current in World War I.

### **through the grapevine**

по сарафанному радио; «одна баба сказала»

MEANING: through the informal spreading of messages, gossip, rumors, or other confidential information from one person to another

*She heard through the grapevine that she was being considered for a big promotion.*

ORIGIN: A grapevine is a long-stemmed plant that winds, climbs, and creeps from grape to grape. In a similar way, news can travel from person to person to person, either spoken or written. This 20th-century African-American idiom could go as far back as the 1600s.

### **through thick and thin**

и в радости, и в горе

MEANING: no matter what happens; under any circumstances / all conditions; through good times and difficult times

*Jack and Bert went through thick and thin together in the war, and they've been great friends ever since.*

ORIGIN: There are many ways to interpret *thick and thin* in this phrase. *Thick* may allude to dense undergrowth which makes proceeding difficult. *Thin*, however, suggests that the phrase refers to times of plenty compared with times of poverty and hunger.

### **throw a monkey wrench into the works**

вставлять / ставить палки в колёса; препятствовать

MEANING: to interfere with a smoothly running operation; to upset something in progress

*The sudden withdrawal of the guest speaker really threw a monkey wrench in the works.*

ORIGIN: In 1856 a tool was invented by a man named Monk and called Monk's wrench. Later the name was changed to *monkey wrench*. The sliding jaw of the tool reminded people of a monkey, and the nickname stuck. This American saying of the late 1800s presents the image of someone throwing a monkey wrench into machinery that's working perfectly and breaking it down.

### **throw the baby out with the bath water**

выплеснуть с водой ребёнка

MEANING: to change things, but lose good things as well as bad  
*I think we should change the system, but we shouldn't throw the baby out with the bathwater.*

ORIGIN: In former times, before people had bathrooms, all the family would bath in one bathtub. First the master of the house would bath, then his wife, then the children, and last of all the baby. By the time the baby was washed, the water was so dark and dirty there was a risk that no one would see the baby any more, and it would be thrown away with the dirty water.

### **thumbs up**

ура; браво; здорово

MEANING: an expression showing satisfaction, agreement, or victory  
*Thumbs up! We've got the go-ahead to make another film!*

ORIGIN: The phrase comes from the practice in ancient Rome, when the crowd would decide whether a defeated gladiator would be killed, in which case they would point their thumbs down, or be allowed to live, in which case they would point their thumbs up.

### **tie the knot**

вступить в брак; связать себя узами брака

MEANING: to get married  
*I don't think I'm ready to tie the knot.*

ORIGIN: The expression existed in the seventeenth century as part of a longer one: *To tie a knot with one's tongue that one cannot untie with one's teeth*. It remained in this form until the early twentieth century but was later abbreviated.

### **till the cows come home**

до второго пришествия; до бесконечности

MEANING: going on for a very long time  
*I'll stand here till the cows come home unless you pay me back the money I lent you.*

ORIGIN: This late 16th-century idiom probably refers to how cows take their sweet time to return from the fields to the barn.

### **till / when hell freezes over**

после дождичка в четверг; когда рак свистнет

MEANING: forever  
*I'll believe you when hell freezes over.*

ORIGIN: This jocular expression was vivid until over-used soon after it emerged at the start of the twentieth century. The writer Scott Fitzgerald used it to sign off letters: *Yours till hell freezes over.*

### **tit for tat**

око за око, зуб за зуб

MEANING: an unpleasant action given in return for one received  
*I forgot her birthday and so she didn't send me a card either. It was just tit for tat.*

ORIGIN: In the 16th century *tip* and *tap* both meant a *hit* or a *blow*. The expression *tip for tap* therefore meant *a blow in exchange for a blow*. Over the time the spelling has altered to the current *tit for tat*.

### **toe the line**

ходить по струнке; подчиняться правилам

MEANING: to obey orders; to accept the policy or ideas of a group

*My friends are going on a protest march in Trafalgar Square. They say it's very important and they expect me to come too. But I don't want to toe the line!*

ORIGIN: This expression comes from the House of Commons, in the British Parliament, where two red lines are painted on the floor separating the members of the government from the opposition. A Member of Parliament who speaks is allowed to stand on the line but not to cross it. Originally the lines were set two sword lengths apart at a time when the MPs were allowed to take weapons into the room. If two MPs from opposing sides drew their swords they wouldn't be able to touch each other without crossing the line and breaking the rules of the House.

### **top drawer**

элитный; классный; суперский

MEANING: the highest quality; the best  
*Aunt Shirley always takes the family to some top-drawer restaurant.*

ORIGIN: The most likely origin of this 20-th century phrase is the top drawer of a dresser or bureau. Many people put their jewelry and other valuable possessions in the top drawer so that they can get them easily. From that custom comes this expression, which is used to describe people of the highest social status or anything that's the best in rank or quality.

### **tough nut to crack**

твёрдый орешек

MEANING: something very complicated to understand or to do; an extremely tough or thorny problem to solve  
*A company whose product has sold well in the States may find the European market a tougher nut to crack.*

ORIGIN: This expression from the 1700s was used by Benjamin Franklin, a great American statesman and scientist, in a letter to his brother. In 1745 some American colonists were trying to capture a French fortress in Canada. Franklin wrote that “fortified towns are hard nuts to crack.”

### **turn a blind eye**

смотреть сквозь пальцы; закрывать глаза на ч-л

MEANING: to pretend not to see something  
*Because he works so hard, his boss turns a blind eye when he comes in late.*

ORIGIN: This is a reference to the naval commander Horatio Nelson who chose to disregard orders in order to engage the enemy at the Battle of Copenhagen (1803). To avoid seeing the signal to turn back his ships, he put the telescope to his blind eye.

### **turn the tables**

поменяться ролями / местами

MEANING: to reverse a situation; to switch roles or positions; to get revenge

*Students get a chance to turn the tables on the lecturers in the annual teaching assessments.*

ORIGIN: This saying probably came from the early 1600s and has two possible origins. In some tabletop board games such as chess, checkers, and backgammon, the table was actually turned as part of the play. There were also tables that had two-sided tops. One side was polished smooth and used for eating; the other side was rougher and used for working on. Now when you *turn the tables* on someone, you’re causing a complete reversal in the situation, usually to your advantage.

### **turn turtle**

вверх тормашками / вверх дном перевернуться

MEANING: to capsize or end up in a position of helplessness

*We lost all our diving gear when the boat turned turtle just off the shore.*

ORIGIN: When a turtle or tortoise is turned on its back it cannot easily right itself and remains stuck.

### **two cents**

свои пять копеек (вставить); свое мнение (держат при себе)

MEANING: an opinion; what someone thinks

*Karen didn't want to hear what he had to say, so she told him to keep his two cents to himself.*

ORIGIN: The phrase *two cents* came from the game of poker in the late 1800s. You had to put in at least a two-cent (or two-bit) bet in order to play. Today when *you put your two cents in*, you state your opinion or give some advice, even if it hasn't been asked for. Your *two cents* get you into the conversation. However, people may tell you *to keep your two cents out* because they don't want to hear what you think.

### **two's a company, three's a crowd**

третий лишний

MEANING: it is all right to have two people by themselves, but a third person is not wanted; said for example by a boyfriend and girlfriend to a third person who wants to join them

*Would you join us for a ride? — No, thanks. You know two's a company, three's a crowd.*

ORIGIN: Before the end of the 19th century another cliché contained the same idea — *two's a company, three is none*, old enough to figure in John Heywood's collection of proverbs, 1546.

# U

## **ugly duckling**

гадкий утёнок

MEANING: a person or a project doomed to failure or unpopularity, but which turns out to be very successful in the end

*The most successful company was last year's ugly duckling.*

ORIGIN: Hans Andersen made the phrase famous with his story of the cygnet reared in a family of ducklings and despised for its odd appearance until it grew into a beautiful swan.

## **upper crust**

сливки / цвет общества; высшее общество

MEANING: high society; social or financial elite; important people

*The poor student fell hopelessly in love with a girl from the upper crust.*

ORIGIN: This expression began to be widely used in the mid-1800s. The upper crust of a loaf of bread was considered the best, tastiest part. *Upper crust* came to mean the best class of people, the most elite in society, those with the highest intellectual, social, or economic status.

## **upset the applecart**

спутать карты; расстроить планы

MEANING: to spoil a plan, arrangement or expected course of events; to ruin everything

*The football team were doing very well when their best player upset the applecart by breaking his leg.*

ORIGIN: The idea of upsetting the cart was used in Roman times with the same meaning, but the qualifying apple was added in the nineteenth century.

### **use your loaf**

шевели мозгами / извилинами

MEANING: to be sensible; show some common sense

*Use your loaf! Can't you be more tactful?*

ORIGIN: *Loaf* is from *loaf of bread*, which is rhyming slang for *head*.

### **user-friendly**

простой / лёгкий в обращении

MEANING: easy to operate / use

*We need a new complaints procedure which is simple and clear. Can you think of a user-friendly system?*

ORIGIN: This expression was originally invented to describe a computer which was simple to use and did not need any specialized knowledge. It can be used for machines other than computers, systems (as above) and can even describe people for humorous effect. This expression inspired the word *ozone-friendly*.

# V

## **variety is the spice of life**

разнообразие рождает вкус к жизни

MEANING: greater choice or diversity makes life interesting  
*Jim dates a different girl every week — variety is the spice of life, he claims.*

ORIGIN: Spices are used to make bland foods more interesting, so variety is said to have the same effect on life. This phrase comes from William Cowper's poem "The Task" (1785):

"Variety is the very spice of life,  
That gives it all its flavor."



# W

## **warts and all**

без прикрас; не скрывая недостатки

MEANING: with all its faults as well as its good points

*Tell me what your new house is like, warts and all.*

ORIGIN: This comes from the instruction by Oliver Cromwell to the painter, Sir Peter Lely, to paint a true likeness of him with all his prominent warts.

## **wash your hands of something**

умывать руки

MEANING: to remove or distance yourself from a matter completely; to leave it to other people to do

*I should imagine he couldn't wait to wash his hands of the whole project.*

ORIGIN: This expression comes from the Bible (Matthew, 27:24). Pontius Pilate, a Roman official in Judea, announced that he could not save Jesus from being executed. He then washed his hands right in front of a crowd of people, saying that he was not guilty of Jesus' death. When you wash your hands of something, you're just saying that it's not your responsibility, or you don't want to be involved further.

## **well-heeled**

хорошо упакованный (богатый)

MEANING: to be wealthy or prosperous

*You need to be well-heeled to be able to afford to stay in this hotel.*

ORIGIN: The allusion is to the state of repair of your shoes. Compare this with the opposite "*down-at-heel*."

### **wet behind the ears**

молоко на губах не обсохло

- MEANING: young, inexperienced, and immature  
*Lisa wouldn't hire him as a manager because he was too wet behind the ears.*
- ORIGIN: When a baby colt or calf is born, it's wet all over with birth fluid. It quickly starts to dry, but the little indentation behind its ears stays wet the longest. Farmers always knew this, but some word experts think that in the early 20th-century, officers in the American armed forces began using this barnyard expression to describe new soldiers.

### **wet blanket**

нытик; зануда; кайфоломщик

- MEANING: a person who spoils other people's fun by being depressing, dull, sour, nagging, or humorless  
*I hope Terry doesn't come to the amusement park with us — he's such a wet blanket.*
- ORIGIN: This is an early 19th-century expression. Native Americans and others often put out their campfires with blankets they had dipped in the nearest river. If fire represents enthusiasm, excitement, passion, and joy, then the wet blanket that puts out the fire stands for a pessimist or spoilsport.

### **what makes smb tick**

что их волнует / цепляет

- MEANING: if you know what makes someone tick, you understand the reasons for their behavior and personality  
*A good salesperson knows what makes a customer tick.*
- ORIGIN: This is said when someone's motives are puzzling or when their stamina or enthusiasm is surprising. The image compares the person's mind with a clockwork motor.

### **whipping boy**

мальчик для битья; козёл отпущения

MEANING: a scapegoat

*I used to be the whipping boy during my early days in the company.*

ORIGIN: At one time if a prince had done wrong he had to have a whipping boy to take physical punishment in his place.

### **whistle for it**

не видеть как своих ушей

MEANING: not to get something; to try in vain for something  
*I'm afraid you've seen the last of your money. You can whistle for it as far as Richard is concerned.*

ORIGIN: It was an old superstition among sailors that if the wind died it could be brought back by whistling. The current meaning of the phrase reflects the futility of this custom.

### **whistle-stop tour**

галопом по Европам

MEANING: a quick visit to several locations *en route*  
*Nine countries in twelve days — it was a whistle-stop tour!*

ORIGIN: In America it was common for a politician to visit many small towns on a campaign tour. Many of the towns were too small to be regular train stops so a signal (*whistle*) was given to stop at the station and the politician would speak from the back of the train.

### **white elephant**

медвежья услуга; обуза; на тебе, Боже, что нам негоже

MEANING: any possession that is useless, unwanted, or costs a lot of money to keep  
*There's a white-elephant sale on Saturday. Bring all your junk to sell.*

ORIGIN: There is a legend that in ancient Siam (now Thailand) a king once gave a rare white elephant to

a person at his court he didn't like. Considered sacred, the elephant couldn't be made to do any work, and cost a fortune to feed and tend. Being unable to get rid of the king's gift, the unfortunate man grew poor in a short time. That's probably what the king intended. The expression was first used in English in the late 1800s.

### **writing on the wall**

грозный знак; зловещее предостережение; дурное предзнаменование

MEANING: a hint, sign or portent of impending disaster or danger

*The "V for Victory" sign which was being chalked up in occupied countries all over Europe was seen by the Germans and the Quislings indeed as the writing on the wall.*

ORIGIN: The idea — though not the precise phrase — comes from the Bible (Daniel, 5:30) where King Belshazzar, the night before his death, is informed of the forthcoming destruction of the Babylonian Empire through the appearance of a man's hand writing on a wall.

# Y

## **you can bet your boots**

можешь не сомневаться; верняк

MEANING: to be very sure of something

*You can bet your boots she won't apologize.*

ORIGIN: Boots were held to be the most prized possession of American cowboys and gold miners. If they gambled on their boots, they were confident of not losing.

## **yuppie**

преуспевающий / состоявшийся молодой человек

MEANING: a young fashionable ambitious person; young rich person who works in a well paid job

*There is a new shop in the High Street which sells beautiful but very expensive clothes. All the yuppies go there.*

ORIGIN: Yuppie is an acronym based on "Young Urban Professional Person". It was invented in America and became popular in Britain during the 1980s. Its fame spread through such books as *The Yuppie Handbook* which described this social group and its status symbols.

As the 1980s and 1990s began to be dubbed greedy and selfish years, *yuppie* acquired an increasingly negative connotation.

## RUSSIAN INDEX

### А

абракадабра 52  
алфавитная каша 7  
алфавитный суп 7  
аристократ 18

### Б

банальный 31  
бедному и вору всё в пору 15  
бедный Йорик 6  
бежать впереди паровоза 64  
без дураков 106  
без напарника не обойтись 61  
без подготовки 89  
без подделки 106  
без прикрас 141  
без разницы 116  
без труда не вытащишь и рыбку из пруда 86  
без утайки 78  
бескорыстный труд 69  
битком набит 27  
бить ложную тревогу 33  
бить через край 47  
блестяще справиться с задачей 30  
блюсти свои интересы 36  
Бог бережёт 74  
бодрый 20  
боевое крещение 12  
болтать 27  
браво 133  
бросить все силы 99  
буквоед 123

«булки» 118  
бульварная пресса 54  
бумажная волокита 106  
бурный протест 58  
быстро отделаться от к-л 49  
быть на вторых ролях 97  
быть на уровне 30  
быть не хуже чем у людей 66  
быть одержимым идеей 55  
быть уволенным 49  
бюрократические препоны 106

### В

в другой раз 127  
в любой момент 9  
в любую минуту 9  
в мгновение ока 14  
в одиночку не справиться 61  
в отпуске делать то же, что на работе 23  
в последний момент 61  
в последнюю минуту 61  
в прекрасной / отличной форме 107  
в приподнятом настроении 47  
в разлуке чувство крепнет 5  
в сорок лет жизнь только начинается 73  
в упор не видеть 50  
в хлам 28  
в центре внимания 60  
в чём мать родила 60  
в чёрном списке 60  
валить с большой головы на здоровую 93

вверх дном перевернуться 136  
 вверх тормашками 136  
 верняк 145  
 «верхние десять тысяч» 63  
 весёлый 20  
 вечный неудачник 8  
 вешать лапшу на уши 100  
 взбеситься от злости 111  
 взвиться от злости 111  
 взглянуть 55  
 вне себя 89  
 водить за нос 71  
 воз и маленькая тележка 39  
 войти в курс дела 48  
 восстать из пепла 108  
 вот это да 131  
 вот это жизнь 131  
 вредная пища 65  
 всё на свете отдать 50  
 все (звери) равны, но некоторые  
     равнее 6  
 всезнайка 117  
 всем пожертвовать ради ч-л 50  
 вставлять палки в колеса 132  
 вступить в брак 133  
 всякий сброд 104  
 всякий хлам 44  
 втирать очки 100  
 втихаря 90  
 выдать секрет / тайну 71, 119  
 выдумать порох 113  
 вылитый 120  
 выплеснуть с водой ребёнка 133  
 высовываться 122  
 высокий 129  
 высококлассная компания 19  
 высшее общество 138

**Г**  
 гадкий утёнок 138  
 галопом по Европам 143  
 глупый как пробка 9  
 гнилая интеллигенция 26  
 говорить начистоту / без обиняков /  
     открытым текст 124  
 говорить, не подумав 113  
 говорить прямо / в лоб 78  
 голубая кровь 19  
 голь на выдумки хитра 84

горький опыт 111  
 грабёж среди бела дня 57  
 грозный знак 144  
 гульнуть по полной программе 51  
 гусарская рулетка 109

**Д**  
 дави на газ 122  
 дай газа до отказа 122  
 дай пять 49  
 дарёному коню в зубы не смотрят 35  
 делать из мухи слона 77  
 делать шиворот-навыворот 101  
 делить на десять 127  
 делу время, а / и потехе час 23  
 держать ответ 40  
 держаться подальше 121  
 диаметрально противоположные 98  
 диванная картошка 32  
 диктовать условия 94  
 для души 69  
 до бесконечности 134  
 до второго пришествия 134  
 до отказа набит 27  
 добиться успеха 20  
 довольный как слон 9  
 дождь льёт как из ведра 104  
 дойти до ручки 9  
 доктор-самозванец 102  
 допрос с пристрастием 131  
 допустить бестактность 37  
 дорожное безумие / бешенство 108  
 доставать к-л 21  
 дотошный человек 123  
 драндулет 89  
 дуба дать 66  
 дурацкие штучки 81  
 дурачить 100  
 дурное предзнаменование 144  
 душа радуется 115  
 дыра 91

**Е**  
 едва 24  
 еле-еле 24  
 ерунда на постном масле 28  
 есть ложь, наглая ложь и статистика 72  
 ехать в Тулу со своим самоваром 25  
 ехать с ярмарки 112

## Ж

жать на все педали 99  
желаю удачи 16  
жёлтая пресса 54  
жёсткий 55  
жив курилка 6  
жив-здоров 6  
живого места не оставить 14  
живые и мёртвые 102  
жизнь продолжается 22  
житейские радости 32  
жми на всю катушку 122  
жребий брошен 35  
жулик 44  
журавль в небе 95

## З

забегать вперед 64  
заводить романы 97  
завязать с ч-л 30  
загладить вину 38  
загнуться 18  
задеть за живое 34  
задраить люки 13  
заискивать 67  
заключить мир 22  
заколдованный круг 26  
закон подлости 83  
закрой рот 100  
закрывать глаза на ч-л 136  
замалчивать 125  
замолчи 100  
замять 125  
зануда 46, 142  
запоминается последнее 41  
застать врасплох 26  
затаиться 72  
затихариться 72  
заумь 83  
захолустье 91  
зациклиться на ч-л 55  
здорово 133  
здоровый 20  
зловещее предостережение 144

## И

и в радости, и в горе 132  
и волки сыты, и овцы целы 56  
и на ёлку влезть, и не уколоться 56

и на старуху бывает проруха 39  
и нашим и вашим 108  
и невинность sobлюсти, и капитал  
приобрести 56  
и никаких возражений /  
пререканий 85  
игнорировать 50  
играть вторую скрипку 97  
играть на публику 98  
идти прямо, не сворачивая с  
пути 45  
из первых рук / уст 123  
избегать встречи 49  
избить до полусмерти 14  
изнанка жизни 111  
изобрести порох 113  
интуиция 117  
искупить вину 38  
испепелять взглядом 76  
испугаться 48

## К

каждой бочке затычка 43  
кайфоломщик 142  
как говорится 31  
как горячие пирожки 112  
как две капли воды похож 120  
как дурак с чистой шеей 7  
как заговорённый 74  
как огурчик 107  
как сказал Конфуций 31  
каменное лицо 98  
камень преткновения 20  
китайская грамота 36, 61, 83  
классный 135  
клиент всегда прав 33  
клюнуть на удочку 125  
клянчить подавание / милостыню 94  
кнул и пряник 122  
когда рак свистнет 134  
козёл отпущения 143  
колосс на глиняных ногах 41  
колымага 89  
консерватор 123  
коньки откинуть / отбросить 66  
косный человек 123  
красивый 129  
крутить романы 97  
крыша поехала 91

## Л

лебезить 67  
левая рука не ведаёт / не знает, что  
делает правая 71  
легко отделаться от к-л 49  
лезть на рожон 122  
лечь на дно 72  
лёгкая добыча 115  
лёгкие деньги 81  
лёгкий в обращении 139  
лёд и пламень 8  
лишний жир на теле 118  
ловко устроился 116  
ломать голову 104  
львиная доля 73  
ляпнуть 37

## М

маленькие радости 32  
мало места 86  
мальчик для битья 143  
мастер на все руки 63  
мастер-ломастер 63  
медвежья услуга 143  
медийный пузырь 79  
между молотом и наковальней 16  
между нами (девочками) говоря 16  
мелочиться по пустякам 120  
мелочь пузатая 67  
мерзость запустения 5  
многого хотеть 36  
можешь не сомневаться 145  
молоко на губах не обсохло 142  
молочные реки, кисельные берега 70  
молчу как рыба 82  
мошенник 44  
музыку заказывать 94  
мягко приземлиться 40

## Н

на (эмоциональном) пределе 9  
на верху блаженства 89  
на волосок 30  
на всех парах 47  
на голову выше 56  
на последнем издыхании 90  
на самом интересном месте 29  
на седьмом небе 89  
на тебе, Боже, что нам негоже 143

навороты 15  
надо же такое сказать / придумать 41  
надоедать 21  
надраить до блеска 120  
найти золотую середину 124  
намного превосходить 56  
нарасхват 112  
настаивать на своём 36  
начать с нуля 121  
начинать заново 11  
начистить до блеска 120  
не баран начихал 88  
не в ч-л вкусе / духе 88  
не вешать нос 85  
не видеть как своих ушей 143  
не все дома 91  
не выбирая выражений 78  
не делать секрета 78  
не идти на уступки в цене 36  
не кот начихал 88  
не отставать от других 66  
не первой молодости / свежести 87  
не поддаваться описанию 14  
не принимать на веру 127  
не работает 90  
не разлей водой 131  
не скрывая недостатки 141  
не суй свой нос 87  
не так всё просто 130  
не унывать 85  
не упустить детали 35  
не уступать в споре 36  
небо и земля 8  
невозмутимое лицо 98  
негде повернуться 86  
немало потрудиться / попотеть 101  
непонятный язык 52  
непроницаемое лицо 98  
непрошенный советчик 11  
нести вахту 58  
нести ответственность 21  
ни пуха ни пера 16, 20  
ни рыба ни мясо 84  
«ни сна, ни отдыха измученной  
душе» 86  
ни то ни сё 84  
никаких «но» / «если» 85  
ничего особенного / стоящего / из  
ряда вон выходящ 88

ночь длинных ножей 85  
нужда заставит 84  
нытик 142

## О

о присутствующих не говорят 99  
обвести вокруг пальца 71  
обойтись в кругленькую сумму 31  
обратиться не по адресу 13  
обуза 143  
обходить за версту 49  
обходить стороной 121  
одёрнуть 128  
«одна баба сказала» 132  
однодневка 44  
однодневка 85  
одному не справиться 61  
око за око, зуб за зуб 134  
опережать события 64  
опустить монетку 119  
осадить 128  
освоиться 48  
остаться в лавке 58  
остаться ни с чем 7  
от великого до смешного 46  
от печки 11  
отбросы общества 104  
отвечать головой 21  
отвлекающий манёвр 106  
отдать концы 18, 51, 66  
отдуваться 25  
откуда дети берутся 17  
отправиться к праотцам / на тот свет 51  
отребье 44  
отсталый человек 123  
охранять 58

## П

паинька 52  
пан или пропал 115  
«папик» 124  
«папочка» 125  
пара пустяков 96  
педант 123  
пей до дна 36  
перебежать дорогу к-л 121  
переборщить 70  
перегнуть палку 70  
передний край 34

передовой рубеж 34  
перекати-поле 44  
пир во время чумы 41  
платить втридорога 94  
плести небылицы 128  
плёвое дело 96  
по велению сердца 69  
по миру пустить 38  
по сарафанному радио 132  
по сусекам поскрести 111  
победить 20  
под горку 112  
под шумок 90  
подлизываться 117  
подлить масла в огонь 6  
подмазываться 117  
подрабатывать на стороне 82  
подстреленная утка 69  
подумать только 41  
подчиняться правилам 134  
подшучивать над к-л 100  
поезд ушёл 80  
пожалеешь розгу, испортишь  
ребёнка 118  
пойти на риск 52  
показать своё истинное лицо 114  
полный сил и энергии 47  
поменяться ролями / местами 136  
помириться 22  
попасться на крючок 125  
популярное имя / название 58  
популярное словечко / словцо 24  
после вчерашнего 82  
после дождика в четверг 134  
последний штрих 43  
последняя капля 70  
посмотреть 55  
посошок на дорожку 91  
поставить на место 128  
потерять работу 49  
поторопиться 113  
пошевеливаться 113  
пошлый 31  
праздная жизнь 73  
предупрежден — значит, вооружён 45  
презренный металл 42  
прекратить вражду 22  
препятствовать 132  
преуспевающий молодой человек 145

прибамбасы 15  
 прийти в негодность 51  
 приказать долго жить 18, 51  
 прикидываться 97  
 прикидываться невинной овечкой 24  
 приложить руки 101  
 примазаться 64  
 примкнуть 64  
 принудительный ассортимент 57  
 принять все меры  
     предосторожности 13  
 притворяться 97  
 проболтаться 71, 120  
 проваливать 51  
 провести 71  
 проворонить 80  
 проглотить пилюлю 17  
 прогнило что-то в Датском  
     королевстве 131  
 прозевать 80  
 пройти проверку / испытание 30  
 прокормить семью 20  
 просить подаяние / милостыню 94  
 просить пощады 110  
 проснись и пой 107  
 проснуться знаменитым /  
     знаменитостью 10  
 простой в обращении 139  
 профессор кислых щей 117  
 напрямик направиться 77  
 прямым ходом 77  
 прятаться 97  
 пуп земли 14  
 пустить шапку по кругу 94

## Р

работать на публику 98  
 раз плюнуть 96  
 разбор полётов 98  
 развалюха 89  
 разгуляться 51  
 раздражать 21  
 разительно отличаться 98  
 разнообразие рождает вкус к жизни 140  
 разобраться в ч-л, понять 78  
 разрубить Гордиев узел 33  
 разыгрывать 100  
 рассечь Гордиев узел 33  
 Расскажи это своей бабушке 130

рассказывать сказки 130  
 рассказывать сказки 128  
 расстроить планы 138  
 расхожее имя / название 58  
 резать правду-матку 124  
 резко бросить дурную привычку 30  
 рекламный пузырь 79  
 ретроград 123  
 решать по ходу дела / по ситуации 96  
 рисковать 122  
 рот до ушей 53  
 рот на замок 82  
 рубить сплеча 113  
 русская рулетка 109  
 рюмка на прощание 91

## С

с блеском справиться с задачей 30  
 с большой натяжкой 24  
 с горем пополам 24  
 с нуля 11  
 с разбитым сердцем 114  
 с ходу 89  
 сбить спесь 128  
 сброд 44  
 сваливать 51  
 свободный как ветер / птица 45  
 свое мнение 137  
 свои пять копеек 137  
 связать себя узами брака 133  
 сдаваться 110  
 сделать из дерьма конфетку 77  
 семь пятниц на неделе 18  
 серый кардинал 53  
 серьёзно обсудить проблему 128  
 сидеть между двух стульев 108  
 сила воли 79  
 сказал буквально следующее 103  
 сколько лет, сколько зим 75  
 сладкая жизнь 73  
 сладкоежка 126  
 сливки общества 138  
 слова не расходятся с делом 99  
 сломался 90  
 слюнки текут 79  
 смазливая девица 17  
 смириться 17  
 сморозить 37  
 смотреть волком 76

смотреть сквозь пальцы 136  
 со всеми пожитками / манатками /  
 потрохами 12, 75  
 собака лает, ветер носит 118  
 соблюдать церемонии 80  
 соль земли 110  
 сомнительный комплимент 11  
 соответствовать стандартам 30  
 сорока на хвосте принесла 74  
 состоявшийся молодой человек 145  
 сошедший с круга 8  
 спам 22  
 спокойный как танк 8  
 «спонсор» 124  
 спонтанно 89  
 спорный вопрос 20  
 спутать карты 138  
 срок годности вышел 112  
 ставить палки в колёса 132  
 старомодный человек 46  
 сто лет не виделись 75  
 стоять целое состояние 31  
 сторожить 58  
 сторониться 49  
 стоять на задних лапках 67  
 стоять на страже 58  
 строгий 55  
 струхнуть, струсить 48  
 суперский 135  
 счастлив как ребёнок 9  
 сыграть в ящик 66

## Т

тайком 89  
 тарабарщина 52  
 твёрдый орешек 135  
 тёмные делишки 81  
 тёмный лес 61  
 точить лясы 27  
 точная копия 27, 120  
 трепаться 27  
 третий лишний 96, 137  
 трудный вопрос 20  
 тупой как валенок 9  
 тят-ляп 117

## У

у детишек ушки на макушке 74  
 убираться прочь / вон 51

убитый горем 114  
 увиливать от ответственности 93  
 угодничать 67  
 удариться в загул 93  
 удачно приземлиться 40  
 уделить внимание мельчайшим  
 подробностям 35  
 удобная мишень 115  
 уйти в загул 93  
 уйти в самоволку 51  
 укладкой 90  
 уловка 22 26  
 улыбаться от уха до уха 53  
 умник 117  
 умывать руки 141  
 ура 133  
 устами младенца 92  
 утаивать 125

## Х

халтурить 82  
 халтурный 117  
 халява 46  
 хватать звёзды с неба 113  
 хватить через край 70  
 ходить вокруг да около 13  
 ходить по струнке 134  
 хорошенькое дело 42  
 хорошо упакованный 141  
 хорошо устроился 116  
 храбрость во хмелю 37  
 хромая утка 69

## Ц

цвет общества 138  
 целитель 102  
 цитирую 103

## Ч

чепуха на постном масле 28  
 чесать языки 27  
 чёртова дюжина 12  
 что (с воза) упало, то пропало 42  
 что в лоб, что по лбу 116  
 что говорить, когда нечего говорить 107  
 что есть мочи 47  
 что и требовалось доказать 102  
 что их волнует / цепляет 142  
 что-то не так / не в порядке 131

чудо морское 56  
чудом избежать 74  
чушь собачья 28

## **Ш**

шарашкина контора 44  
шарлатан 102  
шевели мозгами / извилинами 139  
шестое чувство 117  
широко известное имя / название 58  
школа жизни 111  
шоу продолжается 114  
шум-гам 58  
шушера 104

## **Щ**

щетина на лице 44

## **Э**

экспромтом 89  
элементарно, Ватсон 39  
элитный 135  
энергичный 20

## **Я**

я за всё в ответе 21  
яблоко раздора 20  
язвительная фраза 93

## LIST OF IDIOMS

### A

abomination of desolation  
 absence makes the heart grow fonder  
 add insult to injury  
 alas, poor Yorick  
 alive and kicking  
 all animals are equal, but some are  
     more equal than others  
 all dressed up and / with nowhere to go  
 alphabet soup  
 also ran  
 as cool as a cucumber  
 as different as chalk and / from cheese  
 as pleased as Punch  
 as thick as two (short) planks  
 at the drop of a hat  
 at the end of one's rope / tether  
 awake famous

### B

back to square one  
 backhanded compliment  
 backseat driver  
 bag and baggage  
 baker's dozen  
 baptism of fire  
 bark up the wrong tree  
 batten down the hatches  
 beat about / around the bush  
 beat the living daylights out of  
     someone  
 bee's knees

before you can / could say Jack  
     Robinson  
 beggar description  
 beggars can't be choosers  
 bells and whistles  
 best of British  
 between the devil and the deep blue  
     sea  
 between you, me and the lamp-post /  
     gatepost / doorpost / bedpost / post  
 bimbo  
 birds and the bees  
 bite the bullet  
 bite the dust  
 blow hot and cold  
 blue blood  
 blue-chip company  
 bolt from the blue  
 bone of contention  
 break a leg  
 bright-eyed and bushy-tailed  
 bring home the bacon  
 buck stops here  
 bug someone  
 bumf  
 bury the hatchet  
 business as usual  
 business before pleasure  
 busman's holiday  
 butter would not melt in one's mouth  
 buzzword  
 by the skin of one's teeth

## C

carry coals to Newcastle  
carry the can  
catch 22  
catch someone on the hop  
chattering classes  
chew the fat  
chip off the old block  
chock-a-block  
clapped-out  
claptrap  
cliff-hanger  
close shave  
cold turkey  
come out / pass with flying colors  
come up to scratch  
Confucius, he say  
corny  
cost an arm and a leg  
couch potato / a sofa spud  
creature comforts  
cry wolf  
customer is always right  
cut the Gordian knot  
cut to the quick  
cutting edge

## D

die is cast  
don't look a gift horse in the mouth  
dot your i's and cross your t's  
double Dutch  
down the hatch  
drive a hard bargain  
drop a clanger  
Dutch courage

## E

eat humble pie  
eat smb out of house and home  
elementary, my dear Watson  
even Homer nods  
everything but the kitchen sink

## F

face the music  
fall on one's feet  
famous last words

feet of clay  
fiddle while Rome burns  
filthy lucre  
finders keepers (losers weepers)  
fine kettle of fish  
finger in every pie  
finishing touch  
five o'clock shadow  
flotsam and jetsam  
fly-by-night  
follow one's nose  
footloose and fancy free  
forewarned is forearmed  
freebie  
from the sublime to the ridiculous  
fuddy-duddy  
full of beans  
full steam ahead

## G

get cold feet  
get into the swing of things  
get the sack  
give me five  
give smb a wide berth  
give someone short shrift  
give someone the cold shoulder  
give your eyeteeth for something  
go AWOL  
go fly a kite  
go out on the town  
go west  
gobbledegook  
goody two-shoes  
grasp the nettle  
grey eminence / éminence grise  
grin like a Cheshire cat  
gutter press

## H

hard and fast  
have a bee in one's bonnet  
have a butchers at something  
have one's cake and eat it too  
head and shoulders above someone  
Heath Robinson  
highway robbery  
Hobson's choice

hold the fort  
household word / name  
hue and cry

**I**  
in someone's bad / black books  
in the altogether  
in the limelight  
in the nick of time  
it takes two to tango  
it's all Greek to me

**J**  
jack of *all* trades  
jack of all *trades* (but master of none)  
jet set  
jump on the bandwagon  
jump the gun  
junk food

**K**  
keep up with the Joneses  
kick the bucket  
knee-high to a grasshopper  
kowtow

**L**  
labor of love  
lame duck  
land of milk and honey  
last straw  
lay it on thick  
lead someone up the garden path  
left hand doesn't know what the right  
    hand is doing  
let the cat out of the bag  
lie low  
lies, damned lies and statistics  
life begins at forty  
life of Riley  
lion's share  
little bird told me  
little pitchers have big ears  
live / lead / bear / have a charmed  
    life  
lock, stock and barrel  
long time no see  
look daggers

**M**  
make a beeline for something  
make a mountain out of a molehill  
make a silk purse out of a sow's ear  
make heads or tails out of something  
make no bones about something  
make one's mouth water  
media hype  
mind over matter  
mind your Ps and Qs  
miss the boat  
money for old rope  
monkey business  
moonlight  
morning after  
mum's the word  
mumbo-jumbo  
Murphy's / Sod's / Spode's Law

**N**  
necessity is the mother of invention  
neither fish, (flesh) nor fowl  
never say die  
night of long knives  
nine days' wonder  
no ifs and buts  
no pain, no gain  
no rest for the wicked  
no room / not enough room to swing a  
    cat  
no spring chicken  
nosey got shot  
not somebody's cup of tea  
nothing to sneeze at  
nothing to write home about

**O**  
off the cuff  
old banger  
on cloud nine  
on his / its last legs  
on the fritz  
on the Q.T. (QT / q.t.)  
one for the road  
one sandwich short of a picnic  
one-horse town  
out of the mouths of babes (and  
    sucklings)

**P**

paint the town red  
 parting shot  
 pass the buck  
 pass the hat  
 pay the piper  
 pay through the nose  
 pie in the sky  
 piece of cake  
 play gooseberry  
 play it by ear  
 play possum  
 play second fiddle  
 play the field  
 play to the gallery  
 poker face  
 poles apart  
 post mortem  
 practice what you preach  
 present company excepted  
 pull out all the stops  
 pull the wool over someone's eyes  
 pull one's leg  
 put a sock in it  
 put elbow grease  
 put the cart before the horse

**Q****QED**

quack (doctor)  
 quick and the dead  
 quote, unquote / end quote

**R**

rack one's brain(s)  
 ragtag and bobtail  
 rain cats and dogs  
 rats abandon a sinking ship  
 real McCoy  
 red herring  
 red tape  
 rhubarb, rhubarb  
 right as rain  
 rise and shine  
 rise from the ashes  
 road rage  
 run with the hare and hunt with the hounds  
 Russian roulette

**S**

salt of the earth  
 say / cry uncle  
 school of hard knocks  
 scrape (the bottom of) the barrel  
 seamy side of life  
 see red  
 sell like hot cakes  
 sell-by date  
 set the Thames on fire  
 shake a leg  
 shoot from the hip  
 show must go on  
 show one's true colors  
 sick as a parrot  
 sight for sore eyes  
 sink or swim  
 sitting duck  
 sitting pretty  
 six of one and half a dozen of the other  
 sixth sense  
 slapdash  
 smart Alec  
 soft-soap  
 someone's bark is worse than his bite  
 spare the rod and spoil the child  
 spare tire  
 spend a penny  
 spill the beans  
 spit and polish  
 spitting image of someone  
 split hairs  
 start from scratch  
 steal someone's thunder  
 steer clear of someone / something  
 step on it  
 stick and the carrot  
 stick one's neck out  
 stick-in-the mud  
 stickler for detail  
 straight from the horse's mouth  
 straight from the shoulder  
 strike a happy medium  
 sugar daddy  
 swallow hook, line, and sinker  
 sweep under the rug  
 sweet tooth

**T**

take a rain check  
take it with a grain / pinch of salt  
take someone down a peg or two  
talk blarney  
talk turkey  
tall, dark and handsome  
tell it / that to the marines  
there is more to it than meets the eye  
there is something rotten in the state of  
    Denmark  
thick as thieves  
third degree  
this is the life  
through the grapevine  
through thick and thin  
throw a monkey wrench into the works  
throw the baby out with the bath water  
thumbs up  
tie the knot  
till the cows come home  
till / when hell freezes over  
tit for tat  
toe the line  
top drawer  
tough nut to crack  
turn a blind eye  
turn the tables  
turn turtle

two cents

two's a company, three's a crowd

**U**

ugly duckling  
upper crust  
upset the applecart  
use your loaf  
user-friendly

**V**

variety is the spice of life

**W**

warts and all  
wash your hands of something  
well-heeled  
wet behind the ears  
wet blanket  
what makes smb tick  
whipping boy  
whistle for it  
whistle-stop tour  
white elephant  
writing on the wall

**Y**

you can bet your boots  
yuppie

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Лариса Феликсовна Шитова

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WITH THEIR ORIGIN,**

OR THE IDIOMATIC CAKE  
YOU CAN EAT AND HAVE IT TOO

---

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И КАПИТАЛ ПРИОБРЕСТИ**

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